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The Laurel Token



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“ 'Tis the token you gave me ! ” — *Page 343.*

THE LAUREL TOKEN

A STORY OF THE YAMASSEE UPRISING

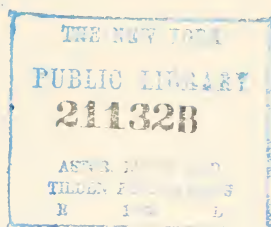
BY,
ANNIE M. BARNES, 1857-

Author of "Little Betty Blew"

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. PICKNELL



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1904



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THE LAUREL TOKEN

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WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION

TO

Miss Ellen Fitzsimons

WOR 19 FEB '36

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THE LAUREL TOKEN

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF CAROLINE

"I WONDER what she will be like," mused Philip.

"Like a girl, of course," replied Charles, his face in a broad grin at his own smartness.

Philip took his brother's bantering good-naturedly.

"Oh, I mean, what kind of girl?"

"Well, I should say a real hoydenish one. You know mother has told us that Aunt Sarah was full of fun and frolic and always getting into scrapes when she was a girl."

"Yes, I remember. But poor Aunt Sarah, she had troubles enough afterwards. It was a good thing she could have the gay times when she was young."

"And now she is dead, and little Caroline is coming to us," added Charles.

His gay tones had sobered suddenly; over his

face, so bright with banter a moment before, a cloud flitted.

“Poor little thing! I can’t help but pity her,” declared Philip, “though her coming will be no end of a nuisance to us. For it’s going to be dreadful having a girl around, I don’t care if she is a little one.”

Philip’s face had such a look of ludicrous seriousness, Charles had to laugh again.

“Well, maybe she won’t bother us much,” he ventured consolingly. “She’ll be only a small creature, and so can make but little headway following us around. But should she show the disposition to keep at our heels, we can bribe mother to shut her up.”

“Oh, mother wouldn’t do that. She will be sure to sympathize with Caroline, and to think we ought to take her about with us, because she’ll be so lonely otherwise. Mother has a kind heart, you know.”

“The kindest in all the world, our sweet lady!”

“Yes, bless her!” added Philip.

Each had thrown his chin up as the words were spoken. A deeper glow came into their eyes. They always had this proud and conscious air when praise was spoken of their mother, even by themselves.

“But we may be borrowing trouble,” said Philip

again, after a moment's silence. "She—I mean Caroline, may not care to run about after us."

He looked at Charles as though he had asked a question to which he hoped his brother would give affirmation.

Charles' reply, however, was anything but consoling.

"I'm afraid she will, Phil. There won't be any other little girl for her to play with, you know,—at least, not near by,—so what else is she to do?"

Philip groaned. As he was not in pain, it must have been in anticipation of the trial to come.

"Oh, I have it!" cried Charles suddenly. "We'll persuade father to lend her out periodically to the Blakes. They have all girls over there, so she'll not lack for playmates. Thus we'll have our intervals of freedom from the little pest."

He thought this so good a joke that he repeated it, then insisted on his brother's telling him what he thought of the plan.

But Philip only laughed at his nonsense. In his heart he had the feeling that Charles would be the first one to go over to the enemy, especially if she were gentle and winning, and fixed her attention upon him. He had a heart not unlike that of the sweet mother whom he so constantly praised, though he would have been the last one to hold that

opinion. He gave kindness, and kindness and gentleness in turn always appealed to him, except at times when he was possessed of a willful spirit, which was rare.

Philip spoke his own thoughts aloud.

“You’ll be the first one to go over to her,” he declared boldly.

“Not I!” asserted Charles, unmistakable reproach in his voice.

Philip did not add what he further feared—yes, feared more than all else: that the newcomer might in some way step between his brother and himself. Then good-bye to the sweet times they had had heretofore in each other’s company. They could not tell their secrets to each other or indulge in those precious hours of communing when heart spoke unreservedly to heart, if a third party were present. And to think this party was a girl! What could she have in common with them? It made no difference that she was but a child. She would be only that much more of a nuisance.

Philip did not speak any of these thoughts because he was ashamed to. In his heart he condemned himself for his selfishness.

“Phil,” said Charles suddenly, “what are you going to call her?”

“Why, Caroline, of course.”

"But it's so stiff for a child, and it's so long, too. Can't we shorten it? Oh, now I know what *I'll* call her!"

"What?"

"Why, little Caro, to be sure."

"But that's as lengthy as the other."

"Yet not half so stiff. Yes, I've fully decided; she'll be little Caro to me. Won't we have a fine time holding her on our knees and trotting her to Banbury and back?"

"*You* will, no doubt," said Philip. "However, if you'll take my advice, you won't start that with her. For if you do, she'll be likely to keep you trotting till the legs of the make-believe horse are worn out."

"But come," he added, as though with the desire to change an unpleasant subject. "So long as we stand here we'll make no headway searching for the calves, and you know father told us to have them all in 'gainst his return. Blow your horn and call 'Rastus and Jupe to help us."

Charles and Philip Ludwell, who had been having this conversation, were the sons of one of the early settlers on Goose Creek, in the Province of Carolina. James Ludwell, a sturdy English gentleman, of a good and honored family, had come to this new land seeking his fortune. He had resided at first nearer Charles Town, and had there built up a fine

business in tar, pitch, and barrel staves. But the duty on these becoming too high, because of the unjust discrimination of the Navigation Acts, he had removed to the Goose Creek settlement, and there engaged instead in planting. He had prospered to the extent that he was in very easy circumstances, and his plantation home, Laurel Hill, was one of the most substantial throughout the settlement. It was now twenty-one years since he had come to the Province, having been one of the passengers on his Majesty's ship, *Richmond*, which came sailing so merrily into the harbor on a bright spring morning of 1693, with many others beside himself on board. Some of these fellow-passengers had now become great men in the Colony.

In the meanwhile Mr. Ludwell had married, and both Charles and Philip had been born at Laurel Hill. Thus they were native young Carolinians, and very proud of the fact. Philip was fourteen and Charles two and a half years older.

Mr. Ludwell had had an only sister, who, about the time he had come to Carolina, had sailed to Barbados as governess in one of the families going out. There she had married a gentleman by the name of Edward Percival, employed in the Government service. The brother and sister kept up a kind of desultory correspondence, sometimes not hearing

from each other for two or three years. He knew, after a time, that she was married, but, as she was rather sparing of particulars, she left much for him to conjecture. Finally a letter came announcing the death of her husband. He had perished by shipwreck while crossing from Barbados to England. The next that Mr. Ludwell heard, his sister was dead, and the friend who wrote sent a letter written by his sister only a week before that melancholy event, in which she besought him to receive and care for her only child, her "little Caroline," as she called her. She would be no burden to him financially, his sister wrote, as she had a moderate fortune of her own. Owing to the winding up of this estate and the finding of a proper person in whose care to dispatch her from Barbados to Charles Town, more than a year and a half went by ere the "little Caroline," as her mother had called her, was ready to embark for the Carolina port. But now the good ship, *Royal James*, twenty-nine days out from Barbados, was due this day in Charles Town, and Mr. Ludwell had gone hither the day before to meet and fetch home his niece, the little girl upon whose coming his two big, sturdy boys looked with such unfavorable eyes.

The planter had gone in his big boat, manned by six stout rowers, with its comfortable canopy-cov-

ered deck, and its fine bit of sail, also, to expedite matters when there was a favorable breeze. In those early days of the Colony nearly all the traveling had to be done by the water-ways, as there were no public roads of any consequence.

Mr. Ludwell owned one of the best boats in the neighborhood. His rowers, too, had the name of being the finest anywhere to be found. Thus, knowing the speed he could make, his family confidently looked for his return that afternoon. Even if the *Royal James* were late in getting in—she was expected about seven o'clock that morning—he would surely return ere nightfall.

Erastus and Jupiter came at the call of the horn, and the four boys, the two white and the two black ones, set off merrily after the calves. They were fortunate that morning, for in three hours' time they had all the calves rounded up. But now that their task was accomplished, or that is the main part of it, the boys seemed in no hurry to get back home. Thus they loitered, while the calves, taking advantage of it, stopped where they pleased to pick away at the blades of grass.

'Rastus was full of the information of a discovery he had made of a wolf's burrow, containing the mother and two of her cubs. He was going to catch the latter, he declared, and tame them.

“Better let them alone,” warned Charles, “unless you want your face scratched and your shins torn by the old one.”

Jupe had made a pleasanter discovery. He knew where there were grape vines laden with the precious fruit. But for the calves and their father’s expected arrival, the boys would have set out at once for the delectable feast.

Thus they talked and loitered, till it was after three o’clock in the afternoon when they reached home. Their mother had saved dinner for them. She had wondered at their long absence; had been uneasy, too, for there was always some danger to be apprehended from unfriendly Indians.

Such a fine dinner as it was! for O-co-nos-tee, the Indian hunter, had come that morning, bringing both venison and turkey.

After dinner they went out on the piazza. Mrs. Ludwell stood near one of the honeysuckle-covered pillars at the upper end. From this point of vantage she could see, though somewhat dimly, her husband’s landing on the creek. Beyond, through an opening in the great oaks, she had a clear view of the waters of the creek as they swept onward to the Cooper.

“I think it must be nearly time for your father to come,” she said directly. “He told me he did not

expect to be later than four or half-past four. It is on the edge of four now," and she looked at the sundial in the yard.

"Come, Charles," said Philip suddenly, "let's go to the landing and meet father."

"And help him bring up little Caroline?" asked Charles mischievously. Then, the light dying out of his face, he turned quickly to his mother.

"Oh, mother, I'm afraid you'll be disgusted with us, no doubt somewhat provoked, too, but Phil and I just can't get used to the thought of this—this little girl's coming. It's good-bye now to all our grand times!"

"Why do you say that, Charles?" his mother asked, looking at him. "How can this—this little girl interfere with your pleasure?"

There was a strange light at play in her eye. Was it, after all, only gravity her tone indicated?

"Because, mother, I am sure it will be so. Phil and I can have no more fine times together if this—this little Caro is to go about after us."

"And no doubt expect us to carry her more than half the time," added Philip, "for, of course, she'll be tired of trudging after us. She'll be a coward, too, I'm sure, screaming every time she sees a lizard and nearly having a fit if a coney jumps out of a bush in front of her."

Their mother seemed about to laugh now, but instead called out to them:

"Dear hearts, I think I see your father's boat. It is just rounding the curve above the willow bend. You will have to hasten if you would get to the landing at the time he does."

They needed no further urging. With a hasty good-bye kiss they sprang away, and were soon clattering down the broad sandy drive between the wide-spreading oaks with almost the speed at which their tackies (marsh ponies) could have carried them.

Yes, the boat was there! well in sight now. It had already turned to make the landing. The rowers were bending lustily to their work, for they were pulling against stream, and as their paddles dipped and rose again a chorus of song swelled forth:

"O brudder, tek care o' Satan,
Ju-be-lu!
I nebber gib up Jesus,
Ju-be-lu!
For all the gol' an' silver,
Ju-be-lu!"

As the words of the chorus died away in a reverent burst of melody, Daniel, the captain of the rowing squad, put his horn to his lips and blew a long and merry blast, then another and another.

These were the signal to the home folks that the absent ones were returning.

The boys could see plainly now the occupants of the boat.

"There is father, and there are Master Hastings and Elizabeth who went with him," said Philip, "and there is another young lady, I suppose some friend of Elizabeth. I see, too, an old black woman, I suppose she is nurse to Caroline. But where is the child, Charles? I don't see her at all."

"She is perhaps asleep somewhere; maybe in the old woman's lap."

"Nonsense! She isn't so small that we couldn't see her if she were there."

"It certainly is strange," admitted Charles. "I wonder if the ship failed to come in, or it may be that little Caro didn't sail by her after all."

"But how about the old black woman?"

"Oh, she no doubt belongs to the young lady with Elizabeth, or father or Master Hastings," he added, "may have bought her in Charles Town."

"I wonder who the young lady is," mused Philip. "See, Charles, how she carries her shoulders, and do look at that air! Why, she might be the Queen herself!"

The boat was now almost at the landing. Daniel had called out to them, grinning from ear to ear.



“My boys, this is your cousin, Caroline Percival.” — *Page 13.*

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Their father, too, had hailed them, and Elizabeth, who was a prime favorite with the boys, was waving her hand and smiling. Only the strange young lady failed to make sound or movement of greeting. She was, however, joining Elizabeth quite heartily in the smile.

"What a fine one she is!" declared Charles with unabashed admiration. "I wonder if she has come to visit Elizabeth."

"I hope so," added Philip with eagerness. "Look at that carriage, Charles! Did you ever see any one save an Indian or a soldier with a more superb one? And yet she isn't stiff. Carries herself as the willow sways. There! she is standing beside Elizabeth, and is fully two inches taller. But I wonder where that child can be," he added suddenly, and looking around in perplexity.

"I am sure I don't know," replied Charles, equally perplexed.

Their father was now calling to them. He was coming up the path, the tall young girl beside him.

The boys hurried to meet him.

As they came face to face, Mr. Ludwell suddenly put his arm about her shoulder, and drawing her toward Charles and Philip, said:

"My boys, this is your cousin, Caroline Percival. I know she already has a place in your hearts."

CHAPTER II

NEWS FROM CHARLES TOWN

IT seemed to Charles and Philip at that moment that if they could only turn and flee to the woods they would be willing to give almost any price for the privilege.

Was this their cousin Caroline? the little girl they had so dreaded and over whose coming they had indulged in both merriment and invective—this tall, splendid girl with the manner they had compared to the Queen's, and the clear eyes of gray now looking into theirs so frankly and heartily.

Each glanced at the other while the face of each went crimson, and "their manners would have disgraced a plowman," as their father afterwards warmly declared, in rehearsing the scene to their mother.

He was provoked with them now because of their stiff, embarrassed air with their cousin. They had given her not even a handshake, bowing instead, and very awkwardly.

"Why do you not greet your cousin with some

warmth?" he asked at length, unable longer to put up with them.

Then he turned to her apologetically.

"Bear with them," he said. "They are only rough boys, and have jogged along heretofore very much as they pleased, having no girl at hand to serve as a check upon their boorishness. I am ashamed of them, I must confess," he added, bestowing upon each a very decided look of disapproval.

Caroline gave him a sudden beseeching glance.

"Judge not so," she said. "I think they intend more than they show. They are only embarrassed."

Then she turned to each of the boys with a look that she meant to be of help to them. But they misunderstood it, and thought it only patronizing. This nettled them. They were sore, too, over their father's sharp reprimand. To think he had given it there before Elizabeth! This hurt them more than aught else. Almost abruptly they turned away, and toward the boat, where the bearers were busy with the parcels of merchandise and the luggage.

Something of the true situation began to dawn upon Caroline. These boys resented her coming. She felt sure of it now. It gave her a feeling of sadness in the midst of the joy that had been be-

stowed by the unmistakable affection with which her uncle had greeted her. She felt dismay, too, at this turn in affairs. Was she to be a note of discord in this happy home? for happy she knew it to be through her uncle's pictures of it. Despite her effort to appear in a bright mood for her uncle's sake, a cloud settled upon her brow; the sadness of her heart was reflected in her eyes.

Elizabeth managed to intercept Charles and Philip as they passed toward the boat, and to whisper.

"You mustn't begin in this way with your cousin," she said scoldingly. "It's heathenish. You are going to like her splendidly, for she is splendid herself, just the nicest girl I've seen in many a day. I am completely in love with her myself, and so, too, will you be, mark my words, my lords."

When Elizabeth wanted to bring them down from any high-and-mighty position, or to be unusually impressive, she generally thus addressed them.

"Oh, I'm sure she's conceited," replied Philip.

"And she's altogether too condescending to suit me," added Charles.

"You are both mistaken," declared Elizabeth even more warmly.

However, seeing that she could not impress them

as she desired, she turned and left them now with an air of all too apparent disgust.

The truth was that Philip and Charles still felt so mortified over what had happened, being especially sore at the remembrance of their father's reproof, that they did not want to look at even Elizabeth. So they were glad when she hurried away to join Caroline in the walk to the house.

The route of Mr. Hastings and Elizabeth led them almost to the beginning of the great oak avenue, with its laurel hedges beyond, and in their midst the substantial brick house of Mr. Ludwell. Near the head of the avenue a path turned aside which carried them to their own plantation, Crow's Nest, a mile and a half beyond; and their chair and bearers were waiting. But to-day Mr. Ludwell had insisted that they join Caroline and himself at their late dinner. He could see that the two girls had at once taken to each other, and he was rejoiced at this. He thought Elizabeth Hastings a fine girl, and he cherished a high regard for her.

Charles and Philip found nothing that they could do at the boat. The bearers of the luggage had already loaded themselves and started to the house by another path.

Mr. Ludwell was now in earnest conversation with Mr. Hastings. Caroline and Elizabeth were

walking together, though they did not seem to be engaged in much conversation. Caroline appeared busy with sad thoughts, and Elizabeth forbore to interrupt her. She deeply deplored the manner in which Charles and Philip had received their cousin. She felt sure that they had not intended to be so ungracious, and she awaited an opportune moment in which so to inform Caroline. There was something wrong, she felt assured, some cause for this strange behavior on the part of Charles and Philip. It wasn't at all like them. They were such fine, jolly boys.

Meanwhile Charles and Philip had begun to walk toward the house. They were in earnest conversation, in somewhat spirited conversation, too, judging from their manner and gestures. They were so deeply engrossed that they seemed to have lost all heed of those who preceded them. Walking much faster than the two girls, they had thus gained considerably upon them, but did not know it.

"And to think we judged her but a little girl," said Philip.

"One who would be constantly dogging our steps and giving us no peace, unless we could bribe mother to lock her up," added Charles, "which we knew our mother would not do, her heart being too kind to stand with us against the little vixen."

“I feel that I must laugh right out here and now,” resumed Philip, “at the remembrance of how I declared we should no doubt have to carry her about in our arms or on our backs more than half the time.”

“And I was to trot her on my knee till the make-believe horse grew faint with weariness,” and now Charles laughed despite himself.

“What would she say if she knew?” exclaimed Philip. “I declare I am ashamed to meet her look.”

At these words he suddenly threw up his head; then his face went as red as the maple buds in spring-time. For there, not more than ten paces ahead of them, were Caroline and Elizabeth, and walking slowly.

“Look!” cried Philip in a low, sharp whisper as he pinched Charles’ arm. “I am afraid she has heard us!”

Charles also raised his head, after crying “Oh!” at the sharp pinch his brother had given him, and he, too, turned crimson.

“I am afraid she *has* heard us!” he admitted. “What a pair of noodles we are, to be sure! Now she will twit us to her heart’s content. Such a stew as we are in!”

Philip waited a few moments, gazing straight ahead, his eyes fixed intently upon the two girls.

There was not a movement or a sound to indicate that they had heard.

"I believe they haven't caught a word," said Philip after a time. "But we must be careful. We surely did speak too loud. I had no idea that they were so near."

He would not have been so secure could he have caught the sounds and seen the movements that preceded by a moment or so the raising of his head.

At that instant, when their first words had fallen plainly upon the ears of the two girls, Caroline had reached out for Elizabeth's hand, and grasping it, had said hastily:

"Make no sound; give no movement to show that we hear; it will embarrass them so. They do not realize how loud they are talking."

Despite this caution, the two girls had all they could do to keep from laughing, especially Elizabeth. Caroline, too, was deeply amused, and once she put her hand to her mouth, as though unable longer to control herself.

If Caroline's heart had been chilled by the greeting of her cousins, it assuredly was warmed through and through by that she received from their mother.

Eleanor Ludwell was at all times a gracious woman; kindness, too, dwelt in her toward all. Es-

pecially, then, did she feel her heart warm toward the orphan niece of her husband, left so desolate and alone.

She did not wait for them to reach the house. She was there under the great moss-draped oak at the head of the avenue, her eyes, her outstretched hands, speaking her welcome before her words did. There before them all she folded Caroline in her arms and kissed her again and again. All saw this, but only Caroline caught the words, murmured close to her ear, and for her alone:

“I have long prayed God to send me a daughter, dear, and now he has answered my prayer.”

The young girl returned the kisses ardently, and for some moments kept her arms entwined about the neck of the sweet woman who had so graciously received her into her home and heart. Her own heart thrilled with tenderness, her eyes were misty with unshed tears—tears of joy. Remembrances came to her of her own mother, who had not been all to her that she might have been, but who was tenderly beloved in spite of this. How she could love this sweet, gracious lady, Caroline thought; yes, how she *would* love her!

At the dinner there was much serious talk between Mr. Ludwell and Mr. Hastings, to all of which the younger ones listened intently. Charles

and Philip had come into the dining room to linger about their father while he ate and talked; talked of all the things he had seen in Charles Town and along the way; of things he had heard, too, of the doings abroad.

It was said that the Queen's health was poor, and that her death might be expected now at any time.

"She has made us a gracious sovereign altogether," declared Mr. Ludwell. "May God bless her and give her a peaceful end," he added with deep feeling.

"So say I, too," exclaimed Mr. Hastings. "She has been weak at times, but we can forgive her all that now."

"If we remember her for naught else," remarked Mr. Ludwell, "it will be for the glorious union of England and Scotland effected during her reign, which has now made Great Britain the most powerful empire under the sun."

His eyes glistened as he spoke. He was a true son of his mother country.

"Who will be the Queen's successor, father?" asked Charles, who was deeply interested in the conversation.

"The Prince George, son of the Elector of Hanover. The crown will be his through the Act of Settlement passed by Parliament thirteen years ago,

which bestowed it upon the Electress Sophia and her heirs, the line being Protestant."

"I hope he will make us a good king," said Charles feelingly, "and always be true to the best interests of his subjects away off here in this wild land."

"It is to be earnestly hoped so, my son. As he is well on in years now, he will assuredly begin by knowing how to behave."

Mr. Ludwell had news, too, of a lighter vein. He gave descriptions of certain costumes he had seen worn by some of the grand ladies, and bantered his wife rather unmercifully as to the requirements the coming fashions would make of her.

But after a time the conversation took quite a serious turn. Mrs. Ludwell had been aware all along that there was some matter troubling both her husband and Mr. Hastings. They had endeavored to shake it off, and to turn the conversation into channels pleasing to the young people. But her quick eyes saw beneath the surface. She was just debating as to whether or not she would put a direct question to her husband, when he spoke a sentence that gave her a cue to the trouble.

"I was sorry to hear those rumors in Charles Town with reference to the Indians," he remarked somewhat suddenly to Mr. Hastings.

"So was I," replied the latter, "but I hope they have been greatly exaggerated. You know that since the recent troubles with the Tuscaroras in North Carolina, there has been more or less of apprehension and rumors constantly afloat of threatened uprisings."

"But the rumors seem to be pretty well substantiated this time," said Mr. Ludwell. "The last runner into Charles Town told a clear story of what he had seen."

"Is there danger, husband, of an Indian uprising hereabouts?" asked Mrs. Ludwell anxiously.

The word pictures of the horrible massacres along the Neuse were still in her mind, and she turned pale as the question was asked.

"I hope not, wife," he answered somewhat evasively, "though they were talking much about it in Charles Town, I must admit. It seems that there is fear that the Spaniards at St. Augustine are taking a hand in this uprising. They have no love for the Carolinians, as you know, looking upon the establishment of the colony as an infringement of the rights of Spain. 'Tis known that they have been for some time trying to stir up the Indians against us, and now it is asserted through rumors borne to us that they have succeeded, and that the Indians,

especially along the Savannah, have assumed a hostile attitude toward the white settlers of Carolina. But never fear!" he added reassuringly; "we still have the gallant Creeks, Cherokees, and Catawbas to stand with us and protect us from the others, as they so nobly did when we marched to the aid of our brothers in North Carolina."

"Oh, that was a glorious expedition!" declared Charles to Caroline, who was seated near him, forgetting now in his enthusiasm his former embarrassment. "There were nearly fifteen hundred of the Tuscaroras," he continued, growing more and more animated as he proceeded with the story. "They had divided themselves into bands and had fallen upon the inhabitants, doing horrible massacre. They killed one hundred and thirty at Roanoke, sixty of the Swiss who had settled around Newbern, and ever so many of the poor Huguenots at Bath. Governor Hyde appealed to our Governor and to the Governor of Virginia. There was not many hours' delay ere our gallant Colonel Barnwell marched away at the head of a regiment of friendly Indians and whites. He scattered the hostile Indians like chaff, gaining a complete victory. He took more than five hundred of them prisoners. Don't you think, cousin, that with such a man as that to fight for us," he concluded, his eyes flashing,

“there will be little need for us to fear an Indian uprising?”

“That is not all our gallant Colonel Barnwell has done,” spoke Philip, eager to add his share in praise of the hero. “He helped Admiral Rhett run the French out of Charles Town Bay. What do you think, cousin? that French commander, Captain LeFeboure, actually had the face to send and demand that the city surrender without any further ado, as he was bound anyhow to capture it! But instead of doing it, our gallant Rhett and Barnwell made the French take to their heels in a way that soon sent them flying helter-skelter beyond the bar. We hear they never stopped till they were well past Stono Inlet.”

“But even brave men cannot stay death,” replied Caroline, and speaking more directly to Charles, “never mind how heroically they may fight in our defense. Even with all the skill and courage of this brave Colonel Barnwell, many scores of lives of the white settlers of North Carolina were lost ere the Indians were subdued. So, too, it may be here. Oh, it is dreadful to think of an outbreak of these savage creatures! even with those at hand ready to protect us. I am quite sure I should be frightened out of my senses just by the sight of them.”

It was at that moment she chanced to raise her eyes. She sat opposite to a window that opened upon a piazza. It had heavy shutters plated with iron, but they were now thrown wide apart.

As she looked, Caroline gave a sudden scream, then raised her trembling finger to direct the attention of the others.

“See!” she cried with lips that were now as unsteady as the finger.

An Indian stood there, spear in hand; an Indian hideously painted, and behind him was another and yet another!

CHAPTER III

O-CO-NOS-TEE

HER finger still outstretched toward the Indians, Caroline sank back, pale and trembling, in her chair.

She expected in the next moment to see the Indians spring one by one through the open window and into the room. She knew not how many more were behind these. The angle of the window frame shut off her vision. Of course, they had come to slay, for what otherwise could be the meaning of the spears in their hands, the knives gleaming in each belt? No doubt the uprising had already taken place.

“Why bless me!” cried her uncle, turning toward her, “what is this? What ails thee, my dear?”

“Cousin Caroline is sick,” cried Philip, making a movement as though to assist her.

But Charles was quicker. He touched her shoulder. Then he spoke to her with rapid decision, but in a voice marked by gentleness and

earnestness, for he, as well as the others, could see how deeply she was disturbed.

“Be not alarmed, cousin. You no doubt take these Indians to be enemies, when really they are friends, yea, our true and tried friends. Why, O-conos-tee, the one in front, is he who brought the fine turkey and venison on which we have all dined. The other two are young men who assist him. He needs their help, as he supplies other plantations beside ours.”

Mrs. Ludwell, too, had come to Caroline's side, for she had quickly noticed the distress of the young girl and readily guessed its meaning.

“Dear heart,” she said soothingly, “you were frightened by their sudden appearance. They do look warlike, but they have only been on the hunt. You are not used to such scenes.”

Caroline pulled her aunt gently down to the chair beside her, at the same time giving Charles to understand how deeply she appreciated his consideration in speaking the words of timely explanation.

“How silly I was to be frightened so easily,” she continued. “I am sure you must both be ashamed of me, and I can't blame you. I don't know what made me act thus. I never gave way so easily in my life before, that I can remember.”

"It was because you are not used to such scenes, dear," said Mrs. Ludwell again.

"Why, yes, aunt, I have seen Indians before," replied Caroline.

"But not Indians in paint and feathers, I suspect me, such as these are," added Elizabeth, who now had the hand of her new friend and was stroking it affectionately. "It was enough to frighten you, poor dear!"

"It was all that talk about the Indians uprising, I am sure," declared Philip. "No wonder you lost your nerve, cousin."

In spite of the gentleness and tact with which they sought to reassure her, Caroline still felt heartily ashamed of herself. How cowardly she must have seemed to them!

"I was silly," she kept saying over and over again. "I was no better than a baby. I ought to have seen that they meant no harm."

The Indians were still on the piazza, and quite a little conversation had passed between them and Mr. Ludlow and Mr. Hastings.

O-co-nos-tee had come with an important communication. He had been at the house some hours before, but finding Mr. Ludwell absent had decided to return at or near the hour he was expected home from the city.

The Indians were asked into the hall, but expressed a desire to remain on the piazza, where they might keep watch upon their canoes through an opening in the trees. They had some valuable articles of merchandise, and thieves were not scarce even in this moral Goose Creek neighborhood. For there were always prowling Indians and some white men of bad repute.

"I hope O-co-nos-tee brings us no bad news," said Mrs. Ludwell nervously.

"Oh, I dare say it is something relative to the trading interests of the Indians," replied Mr. Ludwell reassuringly.

He spoke cheerfully and tried to look so, but the feeling in his own heart was far from sustaining him.

Mr. Hastings followed Mr. Ludwell to the piazza. He, too, felt uneasy. He could see that the Indians looked unusually grave.

Those left in the dining room tried to keep up a cheerful conversation, but the words and actions of the Indians filled all with apprehension. Charles and Philip had relapsed into the old feeling of embarrassment with reference to their cousin. They could not banish from their minds the pictures they had formed of her and of how far away they had been from the real one. Ludicrous, too, they were,

and so uncalled for, while the words spoken concerning the one expected were far from doing them credit. How ashamed they were now of all they had said! How could they have been so unkind even if their cousin had been the "troublesome little thing" so vividly pictured!

It made no difference that she knew not of their words. The feeling of guilt was there. But did she not know of the things they had said with reference to her? Every time he caught his cousin's eye, Charles especially had the uneasy feeling that some part at least of their conversation on the way from the boat had been overheard. He did wish he could question Elizabeth on the subject. He would do that yet, he resolved. But would she tell him? He could see that she was deeply impressed with Caroline. If there had been anything of an understanding on the part of the two girls, he was doubtful of his success in obtaining information from Elizabeth.

Philip shared his brother's uneasiness, and once or twice, as opportunity offered, they had whispered their fears to each other. But Philip, being the younger, lost sight of his embarrassment the more easily.

He was now telling his cousin in animated tones of the accomplishments of O-co-nos-tee, their In-

dian hero. He was not only a brave warrior and a fine hunter—he had accompanied the expedition of Colonel Barnwell into North Carolina and there conspicuously distinguished himself—but he was also splendid in that he knew so many things to interest and amuse young people.

“You must let him teach you how to play ball, cousin. Elizabeth knows. She has had many a game with us. It is fine sport, I can tell you, and so developing to the muscles, too.”

“Could I ever throw a ball straight, think you?” asked Caroline with solicitude.

Philip looked at her commiseratingly.

“But in this game, for the most part, you toss it up and catch it, or try to catch that tossed up by another.”

“So much the worse, then, for with me it may be all toss up and no catch.”

“Oh, then, O-co-nos-tee will teach you so that——”

He had been about to add, “so that you can play as well as we do,” but a look at his cousin persuaded him that this could never be, and his tell-tale face plainly showed his opinion.

She read his thought without the words and gave him a smile that somehow confused him. He fell again into the old state of embarrassment.

“There is another thing O-co-nos-tee teaches splendidly,” remarked Charles, not noting his brother’s embarrassment, “and that is lassoing.”

Then he looked at his cousin’s slender white hands and delicately turned wrists, and he, too, fell into his brother’s error, only his smile was even more significant. The mere thought of Caroline’s dainty fingers ever handling a lasso was so incongruous as to be amusing. He felt compelled to smile. She caught the glance plainly and fully understood the smile.

A peculiar expression came into her eyes, the corners of her lips gave an almost imperceptible twitch, then steadied themselves. She looked straight at Charles. It was one of the looks he had before noted, and now dreaded. It made him feel that she was having amusement at his expense.

“But this you think, Cousin Charles, could in no wise interest me, since I am not at all fitted for so wholesome a sport?”

“Nay, Cousin Caroline,” remonstrated Charles in much confusion; “I did not so say.”

“Yet intimated it so well it was very plain to see,” she replied, evidently enjoying his confusion. Then, as though desirous to shield his embarrassment by drawing attention away from him, she added quickly:

“And does my new friend, Elizabeth, know aught of this hearty accomplishment of throwing the lasso?”

As she said this, she glanced at Elizabeth's hands. They were undoubtedly much larger and stronger-looking than her own. Elizabeth also seemed far the hardier girl of the two.

“Oh, Elizabeth can throw the rope all right, so far as that goes, cousin,” replied Charles, recovering a part of his composure and smiling; “but as to catching anything—oh, that's another matter.”

The smile had changed to a laugh now as he gazed teasingly at Elizabeth.

“I'll pay you for that, Master Charles,” replied that young lady quickly and indignantly, “by catching your head in a noose the next time I have opportunity.”

“Oh, I'll give you leave and a chance, too,” retorted Charles merrily. “I'll even stand still that you may take fair aim, but you'll see how it will be,” he added, with increasing merriment, as he turned to Caroline.

“Tell me more about this O-co-nos-tee,” said his cousin suddenly. “Whence comes he? and how long has he been thus friendly with you?”

“Since I can remember,” replied Philip, who had also by this time partly recovered his ease.

“Or I either, for that matter,” added Charles.

“O-co-nos-tee became the friend of my husband before our marriage,” Mrs. Ludwell now said to Caroline. “James befriended him, and the grateful Indian has never forgotten it. He was accused of stealing a white man’s canoe, and the penalty was to pay a fine or to have his ears cropped.”

“Oh, Aunt Eleanor!” exclaimed Caroline with a shudder.

“It is no wonder you are shocked, dear heart,” replied her aunt gently. “Some of the laws have been terribly severe, truly revolting in the manner of inflicting penalties. But the settlers claim that they have been driven to these ends through the conditions by which they are surrounded. It is a wild, strange land, and the savages outnumber us a hundred to one. But to finish about O-co-nos-tee. Your uncle did not believe him guilty, and paid his fine, and the Indian has ever since been his devoted slave. Afterwards, when it came out that O-co-nos-tee was innocent, and the real thief was caught, your uncle was more than glad that he had responded to the impulse to befriend him.”

“It was truly good of Uncle James,” declared Caroline, her eyes sparkling. “How I love him for it!”

“And will love him for much more when you know him better,” her aunt responded proudly.

“I am satisfied of that, Aunt Eleanor. But without knowing, I loved him the moment my eyes rested upon him; and you, also, dear aunt,” she added softly, her dark eyes in a mist of tenderness as she turned them upon the kindly, noble face bending toward her.

Her aunt gave the hand that stole into hers a loving pressure, then continued:

“There has always been some mystery about O-co-nos-tee. It is believed that he is high-born—perhaps a prince among his own people, and that he has either fled from them, or they have for some reason cast him off. He is believed to belong to one of the many tribes of the Savannahs.”

Mrs. Ludwell was about to add another sentence or so to her information concerning O-co-nos-tee, when, at that moment, her husband entered the room. He looked anxious and worried. His face was pale, his manner nervous. Mrs. Ludwell was sure there had that occurred which had greatly disturbed him. The younger ones also noticed his perturbed state.

“Father,” cried Charles, moving toward him and clasping his hand, “I fear it is bad news the Indians have brought. Please tell us quickly what it is.”

“Not now, Charles, but in good time you shall all know. Be assured of this much now,” he added, his eyes seeking his wife’s face, as though he were speaking more directly to her, “there is no cause for *immediate* alarm.”

Then he added, still looking at his wife:

“I come, my dear, to bespeak your kind ministrations in behalf of poor O-co-nos-tee. He has had his arm badly lacerated by the claws of a bear, and, though suffering great pain, let me know naught of it until every point of his communication had been faithfully made clear to us. The wound needs cleansing, the application of something soothing, and then careful binding.”

Mrs. Ludwell uttered an exclamation of dismay, and held up two of her own fingers in their swathings of linen cloth.

“See!” she cried, “I am myself disabled, James. I burned two of my fingers to-day so severely I can scarce bear to touch them to anything.”

“Poor wife!” he said tenderly, as he bent to kiss her, “and I have not known it! Why did you not tell me before?”

“Because there were so many other things of more importance,” she added archly.

Caroline, who had arisen as her uncle approached, now plucked him by the sleeve.

"Uncle James," she said somewhat hurriedly, "let me dress the wound. I know how. I have had some experience."

"*You*, Caroline?" her uncle asked in a voice which said plainly that he had never dreamed of finding such accomplishment in her.

"Yes, *I*, Uncle James. Don't look so doubtful. I can do it. I have done it before. I was taught how by——"

She did not finish the sentence, for at that moment she caught a sound that caused her to turn her head partly in curiosity, partly in indignation.

Philip had intended to convey to Charles his incredulity through a succession of dumb whistles. But to his dismay they proved anything but dumb, and so betrayed him. Charles had puckered his face in anticipation of Philip's movement. Both boys looked exceedingly foolish when their cousin turned around and caught them.

She gave them a look that made them feel as mean as could be, then turning to her aunt besought her:

"Aunt, dear, please get together what I shall need. You know as well as I. Uncle, you must come with me as assistant. Is not the hall as good a place as any?" she turned to ask of Mrs. Ludwell.

"Yes, my dear, it has plenty of light. But,

Caroline," added her aunt with quick remonstrance, "it will be a sickening sight for you, dear. How will you stand it after——"

She paused, while her face flushed. She had gone further than intended. But it was too late now to remodel her sentence. Caroline had caught its significance.

"After the weak display I made of myself on the appearance of the Indians?" she finished. "Oh, aunt, that was so silly of me! I admit it with shame. I can't account for that sudden weakness. Let me prove to you that I can be braver than you think."

O-co-nos-tee sat upon the skin rug in the hall. He was suffering great pain now, but heroically endeavoring to appear indifferent to it. Mr. Hastings had gone away, leaving the request that Charles and Philip accompany Elizabeth home. He no doubt desired to give the young people the pleasure of further companionship. The two young Indians had also departed. They had gone to keep watch over the canoes. Only O-co-nos-tee remained.

The Indian seemed greatly surprised when he found that Caroline was to attend his wound instead of the gentle, middle-aged lady who had before bestowed her ministrations upon him. At first he watched Caroline's movements with a critical eye,

not striving to conceal his expectation of a bungle on her part. But soon his look of criticism changed to one of surprise, then to open admiration. He murmured "Good! Good!" several times, and looked at her gratefully as well as admiringly.

The young girl's skill was soon apparent not only to him, but to all.

Her uncle openly applauded her. He was so proud of her that his eyes fairly shone. Like his boys he had formed an erroneous opinion of those soft, white hands. He had now found out his mistake. So, too, had they in part. But a greater enlightenment was yet to come.

CHAPTER IV

A SUMMONS

“WHAT a pair of molly-coddles we have been!” announced Charles that night as he and Philip were preparing for bed. “To think what preposterous ideas we formed of our cousin! How mother will laugh at us when she knows!”

“I think she already partly suspects,” said Philip. “Do you not remember the things we had said to her just before she told us father’s boat was in sight?”

“Mayhap she did not take note of them,” replied Charles, now much disconcerted at the remembrance his brother’s words brought to mind.

“Oh, I am sure she did. I understand now the peculiar look she gave us. How could we have been so silly as to speak of our cousin in that way?—to have the thought that she was a little girl who would torment us by running after us?”

“I think it was quite natural for us to look upon her as a little girl,” declared Charles. “Our aunt spoke of her in the letter she sent to our father as

‘little Caroline,’ and I cannot remember our parents at any time mentioning that she was otherwise.”

“Nor I,” admitted Philip. “That surely was strange.”

“Do you think they could have intended to have some amusement at our expense by fooling us?” asked Charles suddenly.

“Nay, I do not think so. ’Tis not the custom of our parents, as you know, to play such jokes upon us.”

“Nay, ’tis not.”

“I am rather of the mind,” continued Philip, “that there has been a failure on our part to understand.”

“Yea, ’tis doubtless true that we have been dullards.”

“It may be,” suggested Philip, “that our parents themselves did not know it at first. When it was made known to them they neglected to tell us.”

“That is it for aught we know. But we’ll soon find out to a certainty. We’ll make a clean breast of it to mother. How amused she will be! She will scold us, too, I am sure.”

“Do you not fear she will tell Caroline?”

“Nay, our mother will not betray us. She will be loth to see us made ashamed.”

"I have the uneasy feeling, Charles, that Caroline needs not to be told; that already she knows much to our confusion."

Charles started as his brother uttered these words, and appeared to be very busy with a refractory fastening.

"We were very near to her and Elizabeth this afternoon," continued Philip, "when we expressed ourselves so freely as to the opinions we had formed of the little girl who was to be such a torment. How shocking if she heard us!"

Charles turned now toward his brother. He had had time to assume an air of carelessness and also to think out an answer that would reassure his brother, even if it did not quite satisfy himself.

"Why, do you not remember that we did not see a thing to indicate that the girls had heard? I think they were too busy with their own conversation."

He paused, then continued, looking convincingly at Philip:

"What girl in the world, I want to ask you, could have heard such things about herself without giving a sign? Yea, be convinced. From what I have caught of Caroline's spirit, I feel sure she would not have lost a minute ere turning around to twit us and to cover us with shame."

"Spirit?" echoed Philip. "Do you call that

spirit when she went all of a white heap at sight of the Indians? ”

“ Oh, I don’t mean that kind of spirit exactly,” replied Charles. “ But you must not be hard on the poor girl. That surely was a trial to her. Think what we were talking about when the Indians appeared ! ”

“ I remember,” admitted Philip. “ The sight of the Indians must have been startling to one unaccustomed to them, and right in the midst, too, of the talk about their uprising. I also recall, Charles, how nobly our cousin acted about the dressing of O-co-nos-tee’s arm. Were you not surprised at her skill and her nerve? ”

“ That was I. If she had suddenly proposed to turn soldier and march away at the head of one of the companies I could not have been more surprised. How grateful O-co-nos-tee was! He is now her fast friend forever.”

Philip busied himself with his own preparations for a moment or so, then he said suddenly:

“ Charles, do you not think it is almost as bad that our cousin is a young lady, or nearly so? Now she will be very proper, and she will expect us to have on our best manners. It will be such a bore! And of course, she’ll want us to go about with her.”

Philip made a face at him, then went on, checking away at his list of grievances.

"We shall have to provide some sort of amusement for her."

"Such as trotting her on our knees?"

Philip rushed at Charles now, belaboring him with the big lavender-scented pillow. Then both boys clinched, rolling together in a heap on the floor. A moment later sitting up, they faced each other, laughing immoderately.

"I wonder if she can ride," spoke Philip again, after their merriment had subsided, his mind still upon the same line of thought—the entertainment of his cousin.

"She doesn't look as though she ever mounted a horse in her life," announced Charles wisely.

"Oh, then what a time we'll have teaching her!"

"Don't lose heart entirely, Phil. There is our father to assist us. He'll be right out-and-out for Caroline to learn. He thinks all girls ought to know how to ride. And so they ought in this wild country, where there is little other way of getting about except by boat."

That night Charles had a queer dream. It was so very amusing to him that he had to tell it to Philip the moment he awakened in the morning. Thereupon both boys laughed in so prolonged and

boisterous a manner that they were asked at the breakfast table, greatly to their consternation, the cause of their early morning merriment.

Charles had dreamed that the ponies were being brought to the piazza for his father, Caroline, Philip, and himself to mount. Caroline was to ride Charles' own pony, Pollux, to whom he had taught a trick unknown to any one else. When Pollux felt the switch ever so lightly tickling him upon the back, he would mirthfully throw his heels high in the air, regardless of his rider. But Charles, prepared for the trick, would brace his feet firmly, and, bending along the pony's neck, grasp his mane with both hands, and thus, when Pollux' heels went down again, Charles would fall safely back into his seat.

For some reason Caroline did not like the looks of Pollux, though he was by many odds the handsomest pony there. She resolutely refused to mount him. To Charles' astonishment, she declared she could ride no pony unless he had a resemblance to Charles himself. Therefore, she insisted on Charles and Pollux being made to change skins. To Charles' utter dismay his father sustained her in her demand. Ere Charles had time to protest, he found himself hard and fast within the brown, shaggy coat of Pollux, and looking out through the

pony's eyes with the long strands of his foretop straggling into them, and not only giving him much discomfort, but also blurring his vision. Charles wished with all his heart now that he had followed his father's advice and trimmed Pollux' foretop.

"I shall want all the switches in the party!" cried Caroline gayly as she mounted.

There! he knew she did not know how to ride. With an awkward leap she landed in a sprawling position upon his back and with a heaviness that made him groan. Her hands, too, made desperate clutches at his mane. But now they were off, and to his wonder she had righted herself and was sitting as straight as any one. She was whipping him, too, with all the switches she had obtained. It seemed to Charles she had double the number of hands, and all were applying the rod at the same time. Now the fact appeared that it had been a dreadful mistake to suppose that she could not ride. She was, in truth, a mighty rider. She rode him at full speed over stumps, across ditches, through marshes, where he sank to his fetlocks in the mud, and where the stiff fronds of the grasses cut him cruelly, and she rode him even up trees. Yes, the last remembrance Charles had was of being forced up, up to the top of a huge oak. There Caroline deftly sprang to one of the branches, and, as she

sank safely upon it, gave him that peculiar cut with the switch Pollux knew so well. Forthwith his hind feet flew straight upward. But, to his consternation, when he tried to get them down again he could not. There he hung, hard and fast, suspended from one of the limbs head down, heels up. His struggling but made matters worse. All this time his cousin sat near by and laughed at him mockingly. Once she said:

“You can see now, Master Charles, how nice it feels to play jokes!”

Still struggling and pawing the air in imagination, and feeling himself as yet within the shaggy, brown coat of Pollux, Charles awoke.

He began to laugh boisterously when he found it only a dream. Then he had to awaken Philip that he, too, might share in the merriment.

When the two boys were asked the cause of their boisterous mirth, they, after some hesitation, confessed it had been due to an amusing dream Charles had had. On being pressed to tell the dream, both went silent so suddenly and looked so confused, especially as Caroline's eyes were turned in their direction, that she at least felt quite sure that she had in some part figured in it.

A gleam of merriment twinkled for a moment in her eyes. She was about to put a question to

Charles, but at that moment Philip asked one of her:

“Cousin Caroline, have you ever been on horseback?”

For just an instant of time it seemed as though she were going to laugh, the muscles of her lips twitched so. Then they steadied, and her face was very grave as she replied to Philip:

“Yes, Philip, I have been on horseback.”

The words came hesitatingly, as though the admission made was done reluctantly.

To Philip and Charles the sentence said clearly that one time she had essayed to ride horseback, but, not knowing how, the experience had been anything but pleasant.

Philip gave Charles a look out of the corner of the eye. It said as plainly as words could have done:

“It is as we supposed!”

Mr. Ludwell now took part in the conversation. His face had a pleased expression. He was glad to see his boys getting along so nicely with their cousin. They had made so brave a start the evening before that by this time he had almost forgiven their ungracious reception of her. He turned encouragingly to Caroline.

“You must learn to ride, my dear, and right

away. That is an accomplishment that no young lady can afford to neglect here. I am glad to see that these boys are desirous of teaching you," and he smiled approvingly. "You must learn, my dear," he repeated.

"Yes, uncle," said Caroline submissively.

"What about going this morning?" asked her uncle suddenly.

Caroline's eyes brightened quickly as she raised them to meet his, but almost as quickly she looked down again.

"I do not feel very well this morning, uncle," she said with some hesitancy.

"I do believe she is afraid," whispered Charles to Philip, then he felt a sudden chill creep down his back, for a certain little movement on the part of his cousin gave him the horrid fear that she had overheard him.

"The dear heart is still nervous from the events of last evening," spoke Mistress Ludwell at this juncture, as she glanced affectionately at Caroline. "I think she is feverish, too, from the trip in the heat of yesterday."

Caroline returned her look with one of deep affection.

"Yes, aunt," she replied, "I do feel very dull and stupid this morning. I fear I would not en—

I mean I know I would not do myself *any* credit on horseback to-day."

"All right then, my dear," said her uncle. "We'll wait until you feel like yourself again. I hope that will be in a day or two. You must not delay too long. I am anxious for you to begin.

"By the way, Charles, your cousin must ride Pollux. He has the easiest gait of the ponies."

At mention of Pollux Philip went off into an unaccountable fit of laughter.

"What ails you, sir?" asked his father somewhat severely, his face plainly indicating that if the offense were repeated the offender would be bidden to leave the table.

"I was laughing at Charles' dream," giggled Philip again.

This time he took care to restrain himself within bounds.

"Charles' dream?" repeated his father, who had by this time forgotten all mention of it.

"Yes, sir," replied Philip, despite the fact that Charles was now pulling at him in the most frantic way.

"Last night Charles dreamed that he had changed into Pollux, and that Cousin Caroline——"

"Philip!" cried Charles, now starting up from his chair and making a movement as though he would

lay his hand across Philip's tell-tale mouth, "if you say another word, I'll pitch you into the cactus hedge the first chance I have."

"All right," said Philip, a daring look in his eyes, "you can if you like, but I am going to tell on you. It is too amusing to keep."

"Father, do make him stop," entreated Charles.

His face was now very red. He looked as though he were about to cry. Unconsciously his glance kept turning from his father to Caroline. It was as though he appealed to her, too.

"Do not tease your brother, Philip," reproved his mother. "Do you not see how you are distressing him?"

"Mother, you'll laugh as merrily as any one else when that ridiculous dream is told. I must tell it. Listen, all. Charles dreamed——"

But Philip got no further than this; for at that very moment through the door of the dining room, which led into the hall, and which was now wide open, a youth came hurriedly, crossing the polished oaken floor with an almost noiseless tread. He was tall and slender, with a wealth of dark hair and deep black eyes. He was dressed as a young huntsman, and the suit of dark green cloth, set off by trimming of fringed buckskin, fitted him to perfection.

"Anthony!" cried Charles. "Anthony Has-

tings! Bravo! It seems like an age since you were here!"

He flew to the newcomer and flung his arms about his neck. Anthony returned the embrace warmly; but ere any other greeting could be received, he stepped quickly to Mr. Ludwell and said in a voice he in vain tried to steady:

"Sir, I am sent by my father, and in great haste. A messenger has just arrived at Crow's Nest from Charles Town. He brings a summons for you both from the Governor."

CHAPTER V

SURPRISES

VARIOUS exclamations greeted the somewhat startling announcement made by Anthony Hastings. Mrs. Ludwell alone remained silent. She had turned very white, and, reaching out a trembling hand, had placed it upon the shoulder of her husband. He passed his arm about her and whispered to her. Then she found voice.

“ Oh, James, can it be that the Indians are already uprisen? ”

“ Nay, dear heart,” he murmured reassuringly. “ ’Tis not thus, I am sure, else would the Governor not summon us from our families. ’Tis about the fortifications, I believe, and the plans for our own defense. I go now for consultation with Hastings. I will return ere we embark for Charles Town so that you may the more fully understand the nature of the errand on which we go. I hope, too, to give you then some idea of the time of our return. Meanwhile I will see to it that you have means of protection during my absence.”

He lingered to make a few hasty preparations, then took his departure, his wife and Caroline following him to the piazza. There they clung to him some moments, murmuring many tender farewells. It was as though he went from them never to return. He tried to cheer them, but their hearts remained downcast. A dark cloud of trouble had risen along the horizon and its shadow had already fallen upon them.

The boys remained in the dining room talking to Anthony. He had been to the Huguenot settlement, some miles away on the Cooper, and had much to tell them. They did not look upon their father's departure nor the cause of it with the apprehension of their mother and Caroline. There had been Indian troubles before, but always there had been brave men to put them down. It was true that this one threatened danger nearer home, but, should it come, they doubted not the courageous spirits of the Goose Creek settlement could fully deal with it. So they went on questioning Anthony and enjoying the scenes he depicted.

He was a wholesome, sunny-tempered youth, with a winning smile, and manners so courteous that, as Mistress Ludwell often declared, it did the eyes good just to look upon him. She often wished that her own rough boys could have his

gentleness, yet as often told herself that if they had she could not love them one whit the more.

Before they returned to the dining room Mistress Ludwell had so praised Anthony to Caroline that she was prepared to find him as charming as he proved. Yet he was by no means priggish. Naught was studied; his greatest charm lying in his naturalness.

He had much to tell her of the neighborhood. Despite the disturbing rumors of impending troubles with the Indians, he promised her that there should be effort made to provide her with amusement. There should be at least one or two special gatherings of the young people. Among other features was his own birthday party, which was to be celebrated at Crow's Nest a few weeks from that time.

In about an hour Mr. Ludwell returned accompanied by Mr. Hastings. They were on their way to the barge of the latter, moored at its landing some two hundred yards below that of Laurel Hill. They had turned out of their way so that Mr. Ludwell might allay his wife's fears as he had promised.

The Governor had sent for them that plans might at once be set on foot for the strengthening of the militia in the Goose Creek district, and also for the refortifying of the blockhouse, which, owing to disuse, had fallen into some decay.

"We hope to be back by the day after to-morrow at the outside, dear wife," Mr. Ludwell said as he kissed her good-bye. "I am rejoiced that I have prevailed upon O-co-nos-tee to remain here during my absence. He will in addition summon two of his best young warriors. I have also asked Mr. Brent, the overseer, and his son to pass the nights here while I am away. But, my dear," he added reassuringly, "I repeat what I have already several times said to you. I feel certain there is no cause for *immediate* danger. I believe that the attack will first be made upon Charles Town and by the Spaniards."

"Then, in that event," she exclaimed with a note of sudden alarm, and unconsciously clinging more closely to him, "the Governor will want to detain you there. He will not send you back to us."

"Have no fear of this," he assured her. "I can convince him that your need is the greater. Another kiss, dear wife, and rest assured I shall soon be back at your side."

"It is delightful that O-co-nos-tee is to remain with us," said Philip in a burst of confidence to Caroline; "but, oh, it is too bad he is so wounded he can teach you neither the ball nor the lassoing!"

"Do not be so overcome by disappointment, Master Philip," replied Caroline, smiling quietly.

"There is yet opportunity to teach me the lessons you so desire. His wound is healing nicely. It will be well in a few days. Then you can have the pleasure of witnessing my blunders."

Perhaps she did not intend to give him such a meaning look, but all the same it caused Philip's face to flush suddenly.

"Oh, Cousin Caroline," he began in remonstrance, "I——"

"Say no more," she interrupted him, giving him a reassuring smile this time—one, too, that he felt had a spice of mischief in it. "You are welcome to all the amusement the teaching of this awkward pupil will afford you."

"But the ride?" asked Philip quickly, "we can have the ride, can we not?"

He was determined to get even with Caroline yet.

"Yes, Cousin Caroline," added Charles, approaching and exchanging a glance with Philip, "we must have the horseback ride. You remember how anxious father is for you to learn."

"Yes," agreed Caroline, "I remember."

"Can we not go this morning?" asked Charles suddenly, and again he exchanged a look with Philip, which did not escape Caroline.

She glanced downward, pretending to be busy

with a leaf the wind had blown upon the floor of the piazza.

Suddenly she looked up. It was to surprise a broad grin upon the face of Charles. He had just turned his eyes away from Philip. He dropped his glance now, flushing a vivid crimson, and looking confused.

But Caroline pretended not to see.

"I will go with you to-morrow morning," she said after a moment. Then, looking down again, she asked in a voice that seemed trembling with timidity:

"But will not the pony throw me, you think?"

"Not if you hold on tight," assured Philip, for Charles seemed suddenly to have lost his voice. His cheeks were still the color of the scarlet hollyhocks in the garden.

"What is the name of the pony you wish me to ride?" asked Caroline, looking up quickly.

"Pollux," answered Philip, somewhat confused by her sudden glance.

"That is the pony Charles rode in his dream, is it not?"

"No; that you——"

But here Philip came to a precipitate halt. He uttered a sharp exclamation also, for at that critical moment Charles had pinched him.

"Oh, that *I* rode. I see! Well, Cousin Philip, I hope he did not throw me, even in the dream."

"That he did not!" and now Philip laughed boisterously.

"I see no fun in this," muttered Charles.

"But you did once. Have you so soon forgotten waking me up to tell me? How you laughed then yourself. I think, Cousin Caroline, I *must* tell you that dream."

"If you do," warned Charles, "I'll not be satisfied with the once pitching you into the cactus hedge."

"Wait until to-morrow, Philip," spoke Caroline gayly. "You must tell me then *after* our ride, and I'll see to it that this warlike fellow here," indicating Charles, "does not carry out his threat of providing you with a bed of thorns."

"He just *must not* tell you," asserted Charles.

He was in agony now. What would she think when she heard that ridiculous dream? How could Philip tell her? But he just should not. She should not have so great a laugh at his expense.

At that moment Mrs. Ludwell called Caroline from within the house, and she hastened away. There was a look in her eyes and a sudden drawing downward of the corners of the mouth that gave both boys an uneasy feeling, Charles especially.

"Phil!" exclaimed Charles suddenly, "I do believe that girl knows all about the dream! You villain! have you told her?"

He started toward his brother looking very warlike, but Philip only laughed. He knew well enough to what end even Charles' direst threats came,—a little scuffling, a pinch or two, then a rolling over and over, with as much fun for the one as the other.

"No; I haven't!" declared Philip in answer to his brother's question. "Upon honor I have not!"

Then his face cleared suddenly. "Oh, now I have it! It was the mother, I feel assured. She has told Caroline!"

"Then *you* told the mother!" almost thundered Charles, and starting toward him in a tragic manner. "Out upon you, traitor! You might have known she would have told Caroline!"

Philip skillfully dodged his brother's outstretched thumb and finger, and instead bestowed a nip himself upon the fleshy part of Charles' arm. Then, as they clinched and rolled over and over like two bear's cubs at play, Philip declared between his gasps for breath, "It was too good! I just couldn't keep it!"

That afternoon the boys had a talk with their

mother about Caroline, during which they confessed all the thoughts they had entertained of her and the confidences they had expressed to each other concerning her coming.

Mistress Ludwell laughed heartily at the pictures they drew of Caroline as a little girl, "the little torment who would follow them around continually and give them no end of trouble."

"Whom we would have to carry on our shoulders and trot on our knees," added Charles, "and correct when she needed it. Yes, and no doubt chastise, too, at times," he concluded, tears of laughter in his eyes.

"Think of our taking any such undignified liberty with this tall young lady, this high-and-mighty Caroline, who can make us tremble with a look!" exclaimed Philip.

"I can understand you taking Caroline for a little child," Mrs. Ludwell said. "So, too, did your father and I for a while, your aunt's letter was so misleading. It was only some two or three weeks before Caroline came that we learned the truth. I cannot account for our failure to inform you, unless it was that we were so engrossed with other affairs. Doubtless, too, our discussions of Caroline were held when you were not present."

"I suppose this was the way of it, mother," said

Charles. "At least, we never got the least bit of the truth."

Having laughed with them over their mistake and subsequent discomfiture, she began to reprove them warmly for their treatment of their cousin at the landing and their present attitude toward her.

"I can see she is pained by it," continued Mrs. Ludwell. "My dear ones, you must get over this stiffness with her. You have, too, an air of resentment toward her, unconsciously to yourselves, I am sure, for it would give me great sorrow did I think otherwise."

"But mother," exclaimed Charles, "it is so dreadful having a young lady around, or one who is almost such!"

"Why so dreadful, Charles?"

She placed her arm affectionately about him as she spoke.

"Because, mother, she will expect so much of us, and we'll have to mind all we do and say, and it will be no end of a bother."

"I think Caroline will not want my boys to be any more than their own mother wants them, gentle and manly, and considerate always of the feelings of others. When they are thus they can be also hearty and merry boys, without fear of hurt to themselves or offense to others."

Having delivered herself of this gentle reproof, so like her, she added in tones even more earnest :

“ My dears, you have begun by having a wrong opinion of your cousin. You must get over it. You look upon her in the light of an intruder, one who will put to flight by her presence all the good times you have had. Without intention this feeling is made manifest to her. It wounds her deeply, and leads her in turn to show not her best side to you.”

She paused, then continued, her eyes fixed earnestly upon them :

“ If I mistake not, we are all going to bless the day that brought Caroline to us. Dear heart! she has already proved a comfort.”

Unconsciously both Charles and Philip felt a little thrill of jealousy at these words. They would have been ashamed to own the presence of this feeling even to themselves, but it was there, nevertheless.

The next morning, shortly after breakfast, the ponies were brought for the expected ride. Following a better impulse than any he had felt since Caroline came, Charles had said to his mother :

“ Do you not think, mother, I had better have Whitefoot saddled for Cousin Caroline? ”

“ Wherefore, Charles? ” she asked, a queer little twinkle in her eye as she looked at him.

“ Because, mother, he is—is a little safer than Pollux.”

“ Why, Charles, I did not know that Pollux was wild. Your father regards him as quite a safe steed, and you know that I have ridden him.”

“ He is not unsafe, mother, I do not mean that; but he is—is skittish.”

“ That will not matter,” she said quickly. “ Caroline——”

But here she checked herself and looked steadily at Charles.

“ Suppose you leave it to Caroline herself, Charles? ” she said.

He did so. But when the matter was mentioned to her, Caroline only gave him a mischievous glance and shook her head.

“ I think I shall try Pollux,” she said steadily. “ What a dear, handsome fellow he is! I think there is no harm in him for even a—a clumsy rider.”

She patted the pony as she spoke, and they noted that she parted his foretop, tucking it carefully under each side of his headstrap.

This done, she looked about as though for a place to mount.

“ Will you go to the block,” asked Charles, “ or shall I help you, cousin? ”

"You may help me, if you please," she replied, looking at him archly.

"Now I shall have a time," his face said plainly as he cast a stolen glance in the direction of Philip.

To his surprise Caroline sprang from his hand to the saddle with an ease and lightness that caused him to scarce feel her weight.

Philip had already mounted, so Charles had only to spring upon Robin, his father's steed, and they were off. This he did with a flourish intended to impress his cousin. He especially desired that she should note his new riding boots with their gay red tassels. They were his first, and he had owned them but a few days.

"Be careful, cousin," he said, "or Pollux may unseat you. He is skittish at times."

She gave him a smile for his solicitude; then asked gayly, "What must I do to prevent him?"

"Hold on as tightly as you can."

"And don't let him go too fast," added Philip, with much more of patronage in his tones than he would have cared to show.

They passed on slowly down the avenue between the green shining laurels and the wide-spreading moss-draped oaks. Mrs. Ludwell waved good-bye to them, smiling as she did so. Jupiter opened the gates. Accompanying him were a half-dozen

or so of the pickaninnies from the quarters, who danced about and clapped their hands with delight as the gay young riders passed out.

"Hold a tight bridle, cousin," warned Charles, "and don't let Pollux have too much head. He is apt to be naughty if he does."

And now they expected to have their play, for Philip had clucked to Whitefoot, and Charles had also quickened Robin's pace. They intended to jog along at a moderate trot, and enjoy the fun of seeing Caroline sitting lumpily in the saddle and bouncing up and down like a bale of loosely bound goods. But to their surprise she drew herself erect with a sudden air of ease.

"Who is for a race?" she cried gayly.

Ere the astonished Charles and Philip had more than time to stare stupidly at each other, she was away like the wind, straight down the wide bridle path before them. She knew it was an open way, for she had heard her uncle say so; that it wound beside the creek for a mile or more till it came to a bridge. Over that lay the road to the church.

Away flew Pollux, head up, hoofs scarce touching the ground, fairly snorting with the delight that filled his pony heart at the realization that he had upon his back the bonniest rider he had carried in many a day.

The eyes of Charles and Philip followed pony and rider till it seemed they would fairly bulge from their heads in the astonishment that had seized them.

With what grace she sat in the saddle! How fearless she was! turning her head even in the midst of the race to shout back to them.

"We are cheated!" cried Charles as soon as he could find voice. "What idiots we were, to be sure!"

Philip made no reply. He looked as silly as any one could look.

"Come!" said Charles, "we must overtake her. It would never do to let her dare us in that way."

"Cousin, how *could* you have fooled us so?" he asked an hour later, as, the race over, they were proceeding leisurely homeward.

"How did I fool you, Charles?"

"Why, by leading us to believe that you did not know how to ride horseback, when really," he added, his admiration getting the better of him, "you are the finest rider for a girl I have ever seen."

"Did I say I could not ride, Charles?"

"Nay," he was forced to admit.

"Then why did you think so?"

"Oh, I scarce know. It was your manner, I suppose."

"Let me tell you what it was."

She was glancing at him now in a way that puzzled him. It made him feel ill at ease, too.

"I think it was because you and Philip took too much for granted. It is never safe to jump at conclusions, you see."

Then pitying his embarrassment, she added:

"My father had much cattle in the neighborhood of Barbados, and many horses. He raised them for the planters. When he died my mother let the man who herded them for him go on with the business as my father had planned it. He was a Mexican, and a most fearless man. He was a kindly man, too, and devoted to our interests. He urged upon my mother the necessity of my learning to ride. She yielded and he taught me. Oh, he was a rare, good gentleman, was Juan Silvo, and we fully believed that he had been a man of some distinction in his own country."

They were destined to hear still further of this Juan Silvo.

CHAPTER VI

AGAIN JUAN SILVO!

MR. LUDWELL and Mr. Hastings did not return on the afternoon they had hoped. Their families, however, did not feel uneasiness, as a messenger was sent to state the cause of their prolonged absence. The Governor had suddenly been called away, and his secretary, in whose hands he had left outlines of the plans, was a slow man. He was a man, too, with political aspirations, and he did not want to give any one the ground to claim that he had bungled things during the Governor's absence. To Mr. Ludwell and Mr. Hastings, burning with impatience to return to their families, because of the uneasiness they felt, despite their assured air when in the presence of their wives, this delay was simply torturing. But there was naught else save to endure it.

It was the morning of the sixth day following their departure, and they were confidently expected home that afternoon.

O-co-nos-tee had faithfully kept his word to Mr. Ludwell. He had not left the plantation even for

an hour since the departure of his master, his friend. But it could easily be seen that he was growing restive under the steady confinement. If he found it dull, the young people did not. They enjoyed every moment of his stay.

Thanks to Caroline's unremitting attention his wound had done nicely. It was now nearly healed. Thus he could take some part in the games and other amusements of which Charles and Philip were so fond. They had had already fine sport at ball playing, and this very morning there was to be a lassoing contest under O-co-nos-tee's supervision. Anthony and Elizabeth Hastings had come over from Crow's Nest, and Sarah Blake from her uncle's plantation, Oakfields, three miles away.

Sarah was an attractive-looking girl, tall and graceful, with deep blue eyes, a mass of shining nut-brown hair, which she knew how to arrange in the most becoming manner, and cheeks in which the roses were always abloom. She showed a violent fancy for Caroline almost from the moment they met, Caroline, in turn, giving her very little responsiveness. It was not in her nature to be gushing. She was, in fact, the reverse of this, having usually a somewhat reserved manner save where her affections were aroused. She had thawed at once to Elizabeth during their trip from Charles

Town, because Elizabeth had met her in a hearty, sincere way that had won her liking from the start.

Not so Sarah; her overpowering manner annoyed Caroline. Her compliments, too, were not pleasant. They were neither opportune nor delicate, and somehow Caroline felt that Sarah was not so sincere as she would have her believe. But she strove to be patient with her and to speak pleasantly to her whenever she could.

They were a merry crowd of young people. The joke had gotten out on Charles and Philip, both with reference to the dream and the astonishment given them through Caroline's unexpected display of equestrian accomplishments, and they were being teased unmercifully.

"I never shall cease to regret that I was not present!" declared Elizabeth. "It convulses me now to think of it."

She was sitting on the joggling-board and Caroline beside her.

Suddenly she looked straight at Charles.

"Whatever made you take the idea into your stupid pate that your cousin couldn't ride?"

He shifted away his eyes, growing at once embarrassed.

"Oh, because, because," he stammered, "she looked as if she couldn't."

"I suppose she looks like she couldn't do many things that she can," commented Elizabeth.

"I think she can do anything she wants to," broke in Sarah, and glanced at Caroline to see if this broad assertion of faith in her ability did not greatly please her.

But Caroline appeared not to notice it. However, a spot of crimson was glowing on either cheek. But these had been there ever since Elizabeth had begun to speak and to so unconsciously praise her.

"See here, my lord," continued Elizabeth, and unmercifully drawing attention again to poor Charles, "listen to a bit of truth from me. It is my opinion that your cousin isn't through fooling you yet."

"I think he couldn't stand much more of it," said Anthony sympathetically, as he approached Charles to give him a reassuring clasp, "at least not now; eh! old fellow?"

Ere Charles could reply, Philip called to them from the yard.

"Come one! come all! O-co-nos-tee is ready! Now for our lassoing contest!"

Two coils of rope had been provided, each about thirty feet in length. Each contestant was to have five throws, he who successfully caught his victim within the noose the greater number of times to be

declared the victor. Erastus and Jupiter took the parts of the wild steers to be corralled. Hither and thither they darted, in and out among the trees, enjoying the fun quite as much as those who sought to catch within the noose each eel-like body. They knew there would be no hurt to them when caught, for the thrower would take care, as soon as the shining circle had descended about the squirming body, not to draw it in with too much roughness.

Charles, Philip, and Anthony, each in turn, strove to see who could surpass the other in dexterity with the lasso. Even Elizabeth was called on to show her skill, and won no little praise. At length, after a spirited contest, in which Charles and Anthony tied, and thus had to try it all over again, Charles was declared the victor.

He was flushed with his triumph and happy, for O-co-nos-tee had bestowed an unusually warm encomium for him.

Charles had thrown down the lasso as he approached the pomegranate bush near which his cousin stood with Elizabeth.

Caroline picked it up, as though in mere curiosity, and seemed to be examining it critically.

"It takes a steady arm and an accurate eye to throw it straight to the mark," he said with some pride.

"I suppose it does," she replied, still fingering the rope. "I should think it would take muscle, too."

"That it does when it is real lassoing and the object to be landed not a make-believe one."

He looked significantly at her slender white wrist, and his eyes said plainly that hers would never be the hands to do any real lassoing. She felt rather than saw the look, and a queer little gleam lingered for a moment in her eye.

The little group was breaking up. It would soon be time for dinner. O-co-nos-tee had turned to walk slowly toward the house. No doubt he felt in need of rest after his vigorous efforts as supervisor. Anthony was already in the piazza and calling to the others. Philip had started to the garden on a commission for his mother. Only Charles, Caroline, Elizabeth, and Sarah had lingered. The first three were yet beside the pomegranate. Sarah had drawn some steps apart from them. She was intent on a spray of honeysuckle she sought to reach.

Suddenly as they thus stood a terrible bellowing broke upon their ears; then a wild outcry of human voices—a perfect Babel of sound, and following it a second bellowing more prolonged and nearer.

In an instant Caroline realized the situation, for

she stood with her face in the direction whence the sounds came, and she saw what had happened. A bull had broken loose from its pen near the lot, and the gate between that and the yard being open, it had come charging through, followed by the screams and shouts and flying sticks of the little negroes who sought to stay its flight. But instead of arresting it this served all the more to madden it.

On it came, its head near the ground, its eyes flaming, while it lashed its tail from side to side and gave vent to the blood-curdling bellowing that had so startled the group in the yard when first it broke upon their ears.

“Run!” cried Charles to Elizabeth and Caroline, and forthwith proceeded to put his own advice into action. “We can make the piazza if we are quick. If we stay here the creature will do us harm.”

He had forgotten all about Sarah, who now stood some dozen paces away, and directly in the path of the charging beast. She seemed paralyzed with fright, making no effort to move, her eyes fixed as though in fascination upon the infuriated creature coming so straight and with such swiftness down upon her.

A quick cry from Caroline arrested Charles in his flight. He turned and with a feeling of horror saw what was about to happen. He echoed Caroline’s

cry, and then stood overcome by his own powerlessness. Not so Caroline. Those who were looking saw that happen which through life remained a vivid picture upon memory.

For an instant Caroline stood irresolute, as though gathering strength and poise for that which she contemplated.

Then, with a swift grace that fairly dazzled the eyes looking upon her, she sprang forward, straight across the path of the rushing beast.

"Back, Caroline!" almost implored Charles. "Oh, my dear, you will be killed!"

He could stand it no longer, and with hands outstretched sprang toward her.

There was a moment within which it seemed all the agony of his life was compressed. Then a girl's straight, lithe form came suddenly to a standstill. The shoulders shot upward, and swift and beautiful as the curve of a swallow's wings the arms made movement about the head. With a whizzing sound a shining coil of rope sped through the air, spread itself outward as the ripple does upon the current of the stream, then fell straight down upon the glistening white horns of the beast.

Not an instant too soon, for at the moment that the coil had descended, caught with such unerring aim, and tightened about the gleaming horns, the



A shining coil of rope sped through the air. — *Page 78.*

head of the beast was not ten feet away from Sarah.

It reared and plunged, and but for Charles' quick aid Caroline's strength would not have sufficed to hold it.

But now the chains of the spell that had held poor Sarah captive were broken, and with a sudden scream she darted away, and toward the house.

"Bravo!" cried Charles as he looked into Caroline's eyes, "what a glorious deed!" Then, as his eyes dropped away with some of the old shamefaced feeling, he added, "And to think I had the idea that those slender white hands were capable of naught like this."

One of the negro men had now run rapidly to them, and to him they released the rope that held the now partly subdued beast.

"Cousin," said Charles as they were hastening toward the house, "*where* did you ever learn to throw the lasso like that? I declare it was the most beautiful curve I ever saw!"

His eyes were glowing with admiration, and both the look and the words warmed her heart; there was so much of sincerity in them.

"It was Juan Silvo," she said, "who taught me." Then her own eyes brightening suddenly, she added, "Oh, he is a master of the art! You should see

him! His hand is as steady and his eye as true as though he were sixteen instead of sixty!"

Again Juan Silvo! What a prodigy he must be. If they could only see him! Well, his pupil certainly did him credit. How she had fooled them all! At the thought of all their blunders with reference to their cousin, Charles' cheeks grew suddenly hot.

They found Sarah in hysterics, though she had not lost the power of coherent speech. There could be no mistaking now the genuineness of her praise. It had the ring of true coin. She felt what she said.

Greatly against her wish Caroline now found herself the center of a group that lauded her without stint. She was not conscious that she had done anything to call for such loud praise. She had only followed a quick prompting, used the skill that years of training had given her. Only when her aunt folded her in her arms and kissed her again and again, while she said, "My darling, it is a great thing to save a life as you have done," did Caroline realize to its fullest the significance of her deed. But even with this she was inclined to give the praise to another.

"It was good old Juan Silvo," she declared, "for if he had not taught me, how could I have done it?"

"But if you had not acted promptly, yea, with

heroism," added her aunt, her eyes suddenly kindling, "what good would have been all the teaching of Juan Silvo?"

Whereby, as we may perceive, she had the better of the argument.

CHAPTER VII

A GRAPE HUNT

THE days passed on. It was now two weeks since Caroline had arrived at Laurel Hill. Rumors of a threatened Indian attack had ceased to come, even the echoes had died away. If the Indians were preparing to fall upon the Carolina settlers and massacre them, there was now no sign of such intention, at least so far as the settlers could discover.

Mr. Hastings and Mr. Ludwell had returned from Charles Town with the intelligence that the Spaniards, too, seemed less aggressive than formerly. If they were sending agents into the Carolina territory for the purpose of arousing the Indians against their white neighbors, they were doing it so secretly that they could not be detected.

The news brought by O-co-nos-tee and his young men had been to the effect that a suspicious-looking craft had been seen in the creek, which, it was believed, had conveyed arms and ammunition from St. Augustine for the Indians. But by the time investigation into the matter could be made, the craft had

disappeared, nor was there any sign that her mission had been other than it ought to have been. All these things had the tendency to allay in a considerable degree the apprehension of the settlers, and to cause them to be less alert. Besides, those who followed planting were now busy in their fields. The rice was ready for the harvesting, and soon the first plantings of corn, now in the ear, would be dry enough for the gathering, and the cane ripe enough to be cut. Potatoes, too, were to be dug, and pumpkins and citron melons to be taken from the vines and dried. If the Indians did contemplate an attack upon the settlements, then one of the most important items would be the food supply, especially if the people were intrenched within the blockhouse. Without provisions they could endure but a short siege. It behooved the planters then to gather in the harvests as speedily as they could, and to have them stored whence they could quickly be removed to the blockhouse in case of an emergency.

Mrs. Ludwell, too, like other thrifty housewives, had her hands full. For there were wool-carding, spinning, and weaving; the cutting and making of garments, soap-boiling, candle-molding, and the dairy and garden to supervise. Besides there were the sick negroes at the quarters for whom medicines were to be compounded, diets prepared, and to

whom daily visits must be made. In all these matters Mrs. Ludwell found Caroline a quick and capable helper. Indeed, she soon came to wonder how she had ever done without her. Aunt and niece were drawing very near together. The tenderest chords in the heart of each had been awakened and stirred by the other. Caroline's love had, even within this short space, grown to a strong devotion. As to Mrs. Ludwell, she had not only come to depend upon Caroline as upon a daughter, but also to regard her as such.

Mr. Ludwell noted the strengthening attachment between his wife and Caroline with a glad heart. Not so Charles and Philip. They looked upon it with anything but approval, in fact, with a feeling that made Caroline painfully aware of their growing resentment.

It was during these days, when the rumors of Indian troubles had died down and the settlers had a more assured feeling, that the young people of the neighborhood were asked by Charles to go on a grape hunt. A remark made by Mrs. Ludwell had at once fired Charles and Philip with the idea.

"I was thinking only yesterday," said Mrs. Ludwell, "that if some such fine grapes as we had last year could be found, what excellent jelly they would make! Should the Indian trouble come that we've

feared so long, the jelly would be a delicacy for the sick people that we could not well afford to be without."

"Why, mother," spoke Charles quickly, "your words recall something I've had it in my mind to propose for a week past. Yes, 'tis the very thing! We'll go on a grape hunt. You shall have more than you want for your jelly, some besides to preserve in sugared layers, such as you know so well how to arrange. Jupe has found out where there are quantities of the grapes, as fine as ever grew."

"Yes, I had forgotten!" cried Philip. "Jupe told us two weeks ago about them, but so many things have happened since that this was quite crowded out of my mind. Do let us start at once."

"Not to-day, Philip," said Charles with decision, "nor just ourselves. Let us tell Elizabeth, Anthony, Sarah, and two or three of the others. We can make a real frolic of it, take our lunch, and stay out nearly the whole day, can we not, mother?"

Mrs. Ludwell looked a little uncertain. Though the rumors concerning the hostile Indians had died out, still she could not get rid of a feeling of uneasiness.

"How far is it, Charles?" she asked at length.

"Oh, only about three miles, mother, I judge

from what Jupe tells me; just a mile beyond the blockhouse."

"Well, you must ask your father. He knows better than I as to whether 'twould be really safe. If he consents, then you may go."

There was no trouble in getting Mr. Ludwell to consent. The Indians in the Goose Creek neighborhood were all known to be friendly. If there were any hostile ones in the vicinity, the patrols would know it. Only that morning they had reported all the surrounding country as quiet.

Charles found it an easy task making up his picnic party for the morrow. Each one to whom the subject of the grape hunt was mentioned, hailed the prospect with delight. Even Caroline felt her blood tingle at thought of the pleasure in store. How she would enjoy the gallop on Pollux through the woods so beautiful now in their first tints of autumn! She would not let anything mar her pleasure, certainly not the thought over which she had troubled for some days now, that the feeling of constraint on the part of Charles and Philip was growing deeper.

The young people were to gather at Laurel Hill by eight of the clock on the following morning, each mounted, and each carrying a receptacle for the grapes. A full half-hour before the time they

were all there, so eager were they to be off on the frolic.

It was indeed a merry crowd that cantered away from the great cedar gates of Laurel Hill on that fair morning in early September. A crisp, fresh breeze was stirring; the drifting leaves, color-flecked, rustled under the feet of the cantering ponies. Overhead there was scarce a wisp of cloud in the blue sky, against which the tall pines threw their green tops, yet glistening with the dew of the night before. Each member of the gay cavalcade carried a deep splint basket, attached by the handle to the pommel of the saddle; all except Sarah. She had declared from the beginning that she wasn't going to be bothered with it. What grapes she wanted, she could eat.

"Then how about the jelly, Sarah, if you do not gather any grapes?" asked Elizabeth.

"Oh, I can get jelly from any of the rest of you when I wish it," declared Sarah with easy assurance.

"Well, don't be too certain, you lazy thing! You needn't come to Crow's Nest expecting jelly."

"Nor to Laurel Hill," asserted Philip, shaking his head at her.

"Nor to Pine Crest, Mistress Sarah," said her cousin, Andrew Leonard. "'Twill be with you as

with the lazy squirrel who would not seek and store his nuts ere winter came.

“ He went east and west and north and south,
But nowhere found a nut for his hungry mouth,”

sang Andrew, and made her a sweeping bow.

“ I shall have all the jelly I want when the time comes,” affirmed Sarah again, and affirmed truly. For it is not seldom that we see these careless ones, too indolent to take the trouble for themselves, provided for through the thrift of others.

“ Let’s do all the galloping we can going,” said Charles, to whom the leadership of the cavalcade had, without question, been assigned. “ We’ll have to take it slowly enough coming back, that is, unless we want to spill our grapes.”

Thus it was they scarce drew rein until the blockhouse was reached, for all the way from the creek there was a wide path leading to it.

The blockhouse stood upon a gentle knoll. It was inclosed by strong palisades of upright posts. The fort itself was built of huge logs, held together by stout wooden pins. It was two stories in height, the upper one projecting over the lower, pierced by loopholes on every side. At each angle of the square inclosure there was a tall sentry box, also provided with small openings through which muskets could be discharged.

The huge gates of the inclosure now stood wide open. Indeed one had fallen from its support, and stood propped against the framing. The palisades, too, were broken in many places, while all over the inclosure the grass was growing rankly.

"'Tis too bad to see the old blockhouse in this state," said Charles, as they drew rein in front of it. "Even if there is no war with the Indians, it seems to me that to be on the sure side, it ought always to be kept in repair."

"That is true," replied Anthony. "Father is out of patience with the men of the settlement because they haven't assembled here before now to make the repairs. He has tried two or three times of late to get them together. If they do not come shortly, he is going to begin work himself."

"So, too, said our father," replied Charles. "He is worried over the indifference of most of the settlers. The blockhouse ought to be ready, he declares, even in time of peace."

"What are all those queer-looking little holes for?" asked Caroline suddenly.

"Those are the openings, cousin, through which the muskets are discharged."

"But how do the men see where to fire? Methinks their eyes could have but small range through such narrow openings."

“Oh, easy enough, cousin,” said Charles, answering her question; “they stoop down and have their eyes focused straight along the barrels of their muskets.”

“Then where there are so many gunners, Mistress Caroline,” added Anthony, “and so near together, they manage pretty well to have a view of all that is going on outside.”

“But are they safe in those positions? Does the smallness of the openings really protect them?”

“Not always, Mistress Caroline. Many of the poor men get badly wounded or their lives are taken outright. Sometimes their eyes are shot out. The Indians can make their arrows go very straight and true. My father has told us of one man who, in the war with the Kussoes, while sighting along his musket, had both eyes shot out. There were two Indians, and each had taken aim at the same instant with his arrow.”

“Terrible!” cried Caroline, covering her eyes for a moment with her hand, while Elizabeth and Sarah, too, uttered little shuddering cries. “Oh, I do truly hope that the time will never come when we shall see such scenes as that enacted here!”

“Amen, Mistress Caroline! So say we all, I am sure, and from our hearts.”

"Cousin," said Charles suddenly, "would you not like to dismount and go within the fort? The others of us have seen it."

"Nay, Charles, I see enough of it from the outside. I will not enter now. But I thank you all the same for the thought to ask me."

She smiled at him pleasantly as she spoke, and her heart was very warm toward him. For ever since they had started out on this morning he had shown nothing of the reserve in his manner toward her which had heretofore given her such unhappiness. He even smiled back at her now as she thanked him.

"Do they keep any of the ammunition here at the fort?" asked Caroline suddenly.

It was Philip who answered her first, and he was laughing as he did so.

"Nay, cousin, of course not. Why should they do so silly a thing as that, with those about who would lay thieving hands upon it? Besides, see you not the state of the fort? What think you would be the condition of ammunition left here?" and he laughed again, and boisterously now. "How simple she must be!" he thought.

Caroline blushed. She really had been very silly, she quickly realized, to ask such a question, but then Philip might have replied without telling her this so

plainly. However, she managed to conceal her mortification and to reply to him pleasantly:

"But, cousin, how would they manage in the case of a sudden alarm? If we had to flee here in a panic, how could the amount of ammunition that is necessary to protect the fort be brought? Indeed, at such a time might it not be forgotten entirely? It seems to me the wiser plan would be to keep some stored here and let certain ones be detailed to guard it. They could change the guards every day or two."

"Exactly what my father has said, Mistress Caroline," declared Anthony, and looking at her approvingly. Truth to tell, he was provoked with Philip for having turned the laugh against her in so unkind a way.

"The fort ought not only to be kept in repair, so my father says, but there ought to be a garrison here all the time, and that the surplus ammunition should be stored here also, instead of being distributed among the different homes as at present."

Caroline smiled at him. What a pleasant, kindly lad he was! How comforting, too, was his gentle manner after the rude conduct of Philip.

"Is that the plan now with reference to the ammunition?" asked Caroline. "Do they keep it stored at the different homes?"

“Yes, Mistress Caroline, usually at those the nearest to the fort. However, during the past month, the plan has been changed, especially with reference to the powder. The most of that is at Laurel Hill and Crow’s Nest. When last my father and your uncle were in Charles Town, they brought back with them several kegs, all of which were stored at the two places.”

“Remember you not, cousin, the trapdoor in the passageway just back of our parents’ room?”

It was Philip who asked the question, and he was looking at Caroline in a kindly way, for he was thoroughly ashamed now of his rudeness to her.

“Yes,” replied Caroline, “I readily recall it, Philip.”

“Well, that is the trapdoor leading to the cellar where the powder is stored.”

“To-morrow,” said Charles, “if you will remind me, cousin, I will show you how to turn the ring and open the door. ’Tis something you should understand as well as ourselves, and I wonder father has not thought before to show you. For who can tell what necessity may arise for you to know how to open that very door?”

“That is true,” said Caroline. “One never knows what conditions war may bring.”

Her heart was warmed again because of Charles' manner toward her.

"Whatever they may be," she added, her gray eyes flashing with a resolute light, "you may count upon me to meet them in no disappointing way."

"I believe you, cousin," was his hearty reply.

"I already know how to open the door of our powder room," said Elizabeth. "When you, too, learn the secret of yours, Caroline, just think how much may depend on us!"

"However much it may be," declared Caroline with steady lip, "I shall be ready. Yea," she added, lifting her eyes to Elizabeth's with a look that thrilled her, "whatever the duty is, I will do it!"

"What a gloomy turn our conversation is taking!" cried Charles suddenly. "Come! away! 'Tis time even now we were at the grapes. Who's in for another canter, even if 'tis right through the bushes! Just look out for your faces that they don't get scratched," he cried to the girls. "The horses will do the rest. They'll get through all right."

Off they went, their merry laughter ringing through the woods, and causing numerous small wild animals to start up here and there in affright.

"Suppose we were to meet a panther," cried Sarah to Charles, who was riding the nearer to her.

At even the thought her face paled. "Oh, what would we do?"

"Shoot him, of course," returned Charles, with a brave air, as he pointed to the musket thrown across his saddle, and also to those carried by Anthony, Philip, and Andrew. "See you not what a fine company we are! Why, Mistress Sarah, we wouldn't even mind a few Indians."

"Well *I* would, if *you* wouldn't, Master Charles," declared Sarah. "Methinks you wouldn't have so bold an air did the red men really make their appearance."

Though she jeered at the declaration of bravery, Sarah nevertheless felt much assured after noting how well armed the little band was; and said no more, either with reference to wild animals or Indians.

Jupe had given Charles and Philip such clear directions that they had no trouble in finding the grape vines. How abundantly they grew! running riot in every direction, and how thick, too, were the clusters of the delicious fruit!

"Dismount!" cried Charles in a gay voice. "And now for a picking race. Let's see who can show the largest amount gathered in the shortest space."

"Oh, it will be Sarah, of course," said Philip la-

conically. Then he added in a different tone, "Come, you lazy girl, and help me, for I am bound to win the race. You just shall not eat all you pick."

"If Sarah helps you," said Charles, "you'll not win fairly."

"Oh, you needn't be alarmed," declared Andrew. "If Phil depends on Sarah's help, you may safely count on his not winning. For not only will she add naught to his store, but she'll help herself liberally to his own pickings."

"You hateful thing to say that!" cried Sarah, and began to chase him with a large piece of the grape vine that had been wrenched off from the stout climber. However, he eluded her, until, thoroughly out of breath, she had to desist.

As they picked, they chatted away with gay voices, though not forgetting the challenge Charles had issued. Fingers were vying with each other as voices sent merry words to and fro.

"We will pick our baskets full first," had been the decision; "then eat what we want afterwards."

Caroline at first had kept very close to Elizabeth, but after a while she began gradually to get further and further away, not only from Elizabeth, but from the others as well. She found the picking contest somewhat exciting. The desire was keen with her

to win if she could. It would be something worth while to see the expression of astonishment Charles and Philip would give her did she come out ahead of the others.

The grapes grew very luxuriantly about the spot where she now was. In her eagerness to pick as fast as she could, she did not wait to secure some bunches higher than the others, but pressed on and on, picking only those within easy reach.

Suddenly, as she stood thickly embowered by the overhanging vines and their clusters of fruit, she became conscious of a rustling in the bushes not far away. Fearing it might be some wild animal she stopped picking at once to gaze intently toward the spot. In another moment she came very near to calling out in her astonishment. A man had risen out of the bushes and was now standing looking steadily at something in front of him.

Following the direction of his eyes, Caroline saw that three of the picnic party were plainly in view, though some distance away. It was upon them that the man was steadily gazing. Caroline wondered what his intention was, for he did not seem to be after any good; but more she wondered who he could be.

He did not belong about the settlement, she believed. Not only was his style of dress altogether

different, but the man himself had every appearance of being a foreigner. His face was very dark, and heavy, shaggy brows overhung his eyes, while great hoops of gold were in his ears. Caroline felt instinctively that his face was an evil one.

She stood motionless, scarcely daring to draw her breath. She did not know at what moment the man might turn his gaze in her direction and discover her. What would he do then? Oh, how she wished now that she had not drawn so far away from the others! But the man did not turn his face toward her. Even if he had done so, he would probably not have seen her, as the foliage made a thick screen about her.

Presently she heard him muttering. It was to himself, as she thought. What was her terror, then, to discover a moment later that he was talking to another man! This second one had approached in so stealthy a manner that Caroline had not seen him until he had stood up beside the other one. She believed that he had crawled as a snake through the grass. He was even more villainous-looking than the first one.

The men now began to hold a conversation in a low tone, and in a strange language, as Caroline thought at first; but soon certain words, not so cautiously spoken as others, began to have a familiar



Caroline had not seen him until he had stood up beside
the other one. — *Page 98.*

sound. Could it be true? Oh, now she was sure that it was! The language was the same she had often coaxed Juan Silvo to use so that she might learn it—his own native language—the Spanish! Then these men were—Caroline felt herself turning cold and sick as the answer was forced upon her. Yes, they were Spaniards! She felt sure of it now. Then what might they not do? And how many more of them might there not be?

Caroline longed to call out so that she might warn the others of her party; she longed, too, to break away and join them, yet dared not move.

The men stood for some minutes, not only conversing in low tones, but also gesticulating. Caroline was sure that they were talking of the picnic party. Suddenly one asked a question, at which the other vigorously shook his head. He also replied in words, and in so unguarded a tone now Caroline caught the answer clearly. "It would not be advisable," the man addressed had declared.

For a few moments longer they stood thus gazing at the young people, more of whom had now come into view. Then, to Caroline's joy, the men moved away, though still muttering to each other. She waited almost breathlessly until they were both out of sight and hearing. Then she sprang away and sped as fast as her basket of fruit would allow

back to the others. Her face was as white as it could possibly be in life, and there was that in her whole appearance which caused Elizabeth, the first to see her, to rush toward her exclaiming:

“ My dear, my dear, what *is* the matter? What have you seen? Why, Caroline, you are as white as death!”

CHAPTER VIII

AN UNREWARDED SEARCH

THE others now crowded about the two girls, for those who had not noted Caroline's sudden appearance heard Elizabeth's startled words.

"Caroline, dear, what *is* the matter?" repeated Elizabeth.

"I have seen a sight that unnerved me," replied Caroline, so soon as she could recover herself. "Oh, do forgive me if I have frightened any of you! But I just could not help it, I was so frightened myself."

"What have you seen, cousin?"

It was Charles who spoke. His face, too, had paled, and his voice was not altogether steady. But the hand that held his musket, as though ready at any moment to discharge it, was quite firm, and his eyes were sweeping with a keen glance the thicket whence Caroline had appeared.

"Is it Indians?" asked Charles in a lower tone.

"Nay, Charles, but something almost as bad."

Then, as she noted his quick glance of alarm as well as the startled looks of the others, she continued quickly:

“Just now as I was in the thicket, some little distance from you, busily picking away at the grapes, I saw a man standing in the bushes not ten paces off, and intently gazing in this direction at Sarah, Philip, and Andrew, who were picking together.”

At this intelligence Sarah gave a little scream. But no one paid any attention to her. All were too busy following Caroline.

“While he stood there,” continued Caroline, “another man came, crawled up through the grass as a snake might have crawled, and had raised himself beside the other ere I saw him approach. They now began to converse in low tones and to make gestures. They were talking about our little party, I soon learned. One wanted the other to join with him in an attack, I am sure, but he could not be brought to consent. He declared it would not be advisable. In a few moments more they stole away, but not until I had learned that they were——”

“What, cousin?” begged Phillip anxiously, as she paused.

“Spaniards,” she replied in a tone she in vain tried to make steady.

Again there came a cry from Sarah, and now frantic words were added.

"Come!" she said, "let us get away. Oh, *do* hasten! Who knows where they are gone? It may be to summon others."

"Are you sure, cousin?" asked Charles as that dread word fell from Caroline's lips.

"Sure that they were Spaniards, Charles? Yes, I am; as sure as I could be of anything of which I had good proof. They not only spoke the language, but as I looked at them more closely, there were other evidences about them."

"Then I think we had better be going as speedily as we can," said Charles.

"Suppose we go only as far as the fort," suggested Philip. "'Tis too bad that we should lose our day's sport in this way. We can at least stop and eat our dinner there."

"Nay," declared Charles, "that will not do. If there is danger here, there would also be danger there. 'Tis not so much after all that we'll lose. We have our grapes and we will have had the ride, the dinner we will enjoy all the more for eating it in the security of Laurel Hill."

"Charles is right," asserted Anthony. "We ought not to stop at the fort any more than we should linger here. Mistress Caroline has seen that

which fills us with apprehension, if not with alarm. Besides, there are those who should know of the presence of these men. Whether or not there are more of them in the vicinity, the patrols should at least be set on the track of these."

"Come, hurry up!" pleaded Andrew. "Don't take another minute for discussion. The sooner we have our horses' heads turned in the direction of home, the better. For how do we know but that these men are gone away to summon others."

He was already mounting his horse, and, as the last words were spoken, had moved off at a brisk pace despite the basket of fruit he carried.

The others were not slow in following his example, and soon the whole cavalcade was making its way through the woods at as lively a pace as their burdens would permit. As they rode along the lads of the party did not fail to keep their eyes on the alert and their muskets ready for instant action. But nothing of an alarming nature was seen, and in about three-quarters of an hour they rode safely up to the great cedar gates of Laurel Hill.

With astonishment, not unmingled with alarm, Mrs. Ludwell saw them return at this hour, but a little past noon. Mr. Ludwell was also in the house. He had been somewhat delayed getting in from the fields and was still at dinner. Despite that the meal

was not yet finished, he appeared quickly at his wife's summons.

"Why, children," he cried, as they came cantering up to the piazza, "what is the matter? What has brought you back so early?"

"Surely there is naught of ill that has befallen any one of you," added his wife quickly, and speaking in a voice that indicated considerable apprehension.

"Nay, mother," Charles' blithe voice answered her, as, springing from his horse, he ran quickly up the steps to her side. "'Tis naught of hurt to any one that has brought us back. But our cousin Caroline, while picking grapes alone in a thicket some distance from us, saw and heard something that alarmed us. In truth, sir," he added, turning now to his father, "the occurrence was of so grave a nature, we decided to set out at once for home, so that we might tell those older and wiser than ourselves."

By this time all the young people had assembled on the wide piazza, and were adding their excited comments to Charles' communication.

Unable to gather anything clearly from the hubbub of voices, Mr. Ludwell implored silence, that Caroline might have opportunity to relate to him in a more intelligible manner an account of the morn-

ing's adventure. This she did in so clear and concise a way that he soon grasped the situation.

"Are you sure they were Spaniards, my dear?"

"Yes, uncle, as sure as I can be without positive proof. They had the appearance and the language, and in part they had the Spanish dress. And oh, they were so villainous-looking!" She shuddered now at the remembrance.

"Then these two men must belong to the party of Spanish spies about which O-co-nos-tee has been so concerned. The Indian has again and again of late endeavored to arouse us to the urgency of a more rigid search. But always the patrols interfered by declaring that with the vigilance they exercised, 'twas impossible for anything of a suspicious nature to be hidden for miles around."

"Well, father," exclaimed Charles, "this looks as though O-co-nos-tee was right. Our cousin Caroline is positive that the two men she saw were Spaniards, and their actions showed that they meant harm."

"So I believe, my son, and I am going at once to spread the alarm and to insist that a searching squad be speedily organized. We must at least come up with these men and find out just what they are after."

"Do not go until you have finished your meal,"

pleaded his wife. Then, her eyes twinkling as she glanced from one to the other of the faces about her, she added, "I am sure that these young people here will have no objections to joining you."

"That is true, mother," declared Philip. "As for my part, I am as hungry as a wolf. And just look at Anthony! Hunger gleams in his eye. I do believe that at this moment he could eat even a slice of alligator."

"Just try me on something a little less tough," besought Anthony. Truth to tell, he was ravenously hungry.

"You can believe me, madam," he continued, and doffing his hat with great gallantry to Mrs. Ludwell, "that any one would grow hungry at thought of the viands for which your table is famed."

"Oh, Anthony," cried the lady reproachfully, "to think *you* would stoop to flatter. For shame! I am surprised at you!"

"Truth never flatters, Madam Ludwell," he said again with the air of a young courtier. Then, offering her his arm with an increased gallantry, he led her toward the dining room, the others following, Philip, Charles, and Andrew with the picnic baskets.

"It will not be quite so much fun as eating out

under the trees," said Philip, "and no doubt our lunches are somewhat spoiled by this time from so much jolting, but then we shall not have the fear of the Spaniards to keep us company."

"True, Phil," agreed Andrew. "I for one should not have fancied a Spanish bullet added to the lunch. How truly fortunate for us that your cousin saw them without being discovered! for I can't get over the idea that they went away to summon others."

"Just what I, too, feared," confessed Charles.

Mr. Ludwell was as good as his word. As soon as he had finished eating, and he made no delay about it, he mounted his horse and rode rapidly in the direction of Crow's Nest.

In an hour's time the hunting squad had been formed, and during the remainder of that afternoon, as well as through the night and until noon of the next day, the search was continued. But without avail. No trace of the men could be found. Yet despite this failure there was little tendency to question the accuracy of Caroline's statements. That she had really seen and heard the men as described, but few doubted. There was a feeling of growing uneasiness when they could not be found. Caroline's adventure, her descriptions of the men, were but a strengthening of O-co-nos-tee's repeated assertion

that he believed Spanish spies to be in the neighborhood.

“They have no doubt eluded us by slipping around through one of the waterways,” declared Mr. Ludwell. “We should have thought of that from the first. I fear me now ’tis too late to circumvent them. Still, we can but make trial in that direction.”

Boats were quickly procured and a close examination made of the creek and all of its arms. The search was continued down to the mouth of the creek, but with the same result. No Spaniards were to be found; not even any suspicious characters. The only strangers in the neighborhood were a gentleman and his two servants who had put up at the inn of the Golden Horse Shoe which stood near the settlement cross-roads. The gentleman was a wealthy trader. He was looking for pelts, those of the costliest kind. ’Twas said he had an order to ship five thousand pounds’ worth to England.

“I fear me the men have slipped away by means of the river and thence to sea,” said Mr. Ludwell, as the second search proved vain. “Well, one thing this incident will teach us, and that is to be less assured for the future and more upon the alert.”

That evening Mr. Ludwell told Caroline more of

the nature of the trouble that threatened the settlers of Carolina.

"'Tis from the Yamassees this time we are to expect the worst blow," he said after a pause.

"The Yamassees!" exclaimed Charles. "Why, father, how you surprise me! I thought they were our friends, first, last, and always."

"So, too, thought others, Charles; those older than you. Since the coming of the first settlers the attitude of the Yamassees has been one of friendliness."

"And not only our friends, but our allies," said Charles. "Do you not recall, father, that full two score of them marched away with brave Colonel Barnwell into North Carolina?"

"That I do, Charles, and the record shows that a goodly number of them proved their allegiance by the sacrifice of their lives."

"Are you sure that these former good friends are really going to give us trouble?" asked Mrs. Ludwell.

Her astonishment on learning of the present warlike attitude of the Yamassees was fully as great as that of Charles. Heretofore she had heard only good of them.

"It seems so, dear wife. The signs have been too manifest to be misunderstood, though, 'tis true,

things have quieted down now to a considerable degree. Still, as I have already said, 'tis best not to be too assured nor to slacken our vigilance. We have learned by this time that there is never any cessation of danger so far as our relentless enemies, the Spaniards, are concerned."

"Ah, the Spaniards!" exclaimed Mrs. Ludwell, her face suddenly blanching. "I fear they are the main cause of the trouble. Why can they not leave us in peace?"

"Because, dear Eleanor, to see us in a state of quietude is the last thing they desire. So long as matters remain as they are now between the two countries, England and Spain, each constantly striving for the mastery here in the New World—these Spaniards at St. Augustine will continue to be our unrelenting foes. Recall you not that twice already they have united with the Indians for the extermination of the Carolina settlers? But thanks to a merciful Providence and to the alertness and heroism of the settlers themselves, the plots failed. At first the federation was formed with the Cherokees and Muscogees. Now they seek to use the Yamassees against us."

"But surely, James, they will not succeed. I cannot think the Yamassees will become our enemies."

"Nay, father," added Charles, "it seems too impossible to be true. Have not the Yamassees joined us more than once in raids against these very Spaniards? Did not many of them lose their lives in our defense during the attack on St. Augustine?"

"And were there not scores of them," added Philip, "who volunteered to aid us when it was believed the Spanish fleet was in the act of falling upon Charles Town?"

"This may all be," agreed Mr. Ludwell; "but things have changed now. The Spaniards have won these Indians to their plans, or at least fears exist that such is the case. Besides," he continued, his eyes turning now toward his wife, as he spoke more directly to her, "the Indians themselves are growing restless and embittered. They have not been treated fairly in the matter of their lands. Promises have been broken, the terms of treaties ruthlessly disregarded, and, what is worst of all, the Indians themselves have been entrapped and carried away into slavery."

"Oh, uncle," cried Caroline at this moment, "can this be true? How shameful!"

She had been sitting near, listening intently to all that was said, but joining little in the conversation. Now at these words from her uncle her indignation

flamed up hotly, and the words came almost with the force of an explosion.

“It is only too sadly true, Caroline. A condition exists that the better class of our settlers deplore with all their hearts; but they are powerless to stem the current of events as long as the Government itself is against them.”

“*The Government!*” cried Caroline. “Oh, uncle, I thought there were only fine and noble men at the head of the affairs of this Province. Did not the King give the charter to these Lords Proprietors that they might do good here, and not evil?”

“Yes, my dear Caroline, such are the terms. Yea, the very words of the document bestowing the lands declare that inasmuch as one of the avowed objects of the Proprietors in seeking the grant had been that the Gospel might be propagated among the Indians, they must see to it that this pledge is faithfully carried out.”

“Then why has it not been thus?” she cried, her eyes burning with the indignation she felt. “Why are these poor creatures so shamefully neglected? for aunt has told me that in all this vast section, from the sea to the mountains, there is but one missionary for them. Why, too, have they been cheated out of their lands when the treaty stipulates

they must be dealt with honorably? But most shameful of all, why have they been entrapped and sold as beasts are sold that men use for burdens?"

"Why, my child? Because, alas! there are men too easily prone to forget their most sacred obligations that they may follow only their own selfish inclinations. It is greed that has been the cause of it all."

"Why does not the Governor interfere, uncle?" asked Caroline with unabated warmth.

"The Governor! Ah, now, my child, you are coming to a remedy. 'Tis upon the Governor at present that all our hopes are centered. But he is a young man, and has but lately come into the office. However, he has in such short space promised so well that our hopes of him are high."

"Father," asked Charles suddenly, "have you not yet seen Governor Craven?"

"No, Charles; much to my regret, I have not. He has been away a great deal of late. 'Tis said he is informing himself well as to the situation. Should the Indian trouble break as a storm upon our heads, it will not find him unprepared. It is even whispered that he will take the field himself at the head of the troops."

"Then he must be a sturdy young man of yeo-

man blood," said Caroline, "in short, one of the people. For no young gentleman of delicate rearing would go about among the Indian villages, as you have told us he is doing, eating their hard fare, sleeping on the ground, and enduring other like hardships."

"There you are mistaken, Cousin Caroline," cried Charles ere his father could reply. "Our Governor is from the nobility. He is Lord Craven as well as Governor Craven, a brother of the late Palatine, and a son of the old Earl of Craven, third Palatine of Carolina. 'Tis said he came straight from the London court to the wilds of Carolina, and he ought to be a good fighter. For the old Earl was in many battles with the great Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and so greatly did he distinguish himself that the King more than once complimented him in person."

His father looked at him approvingly.

"I see, my son," he said, "that you are well informed as to our Governor's family history. It pleases me when you show this tendency to keep up with the affairs of our times. Yes, my dear," he added, turning now to Caroline, "we entertain high hopes of our Governor. That he will abate many of the evils now existing and cut off others entirely we earnestly believe. When I tell you that

some of our governors themselves have not hesitated to buy and sell Indian slaves you can see how great this evil alone has become. But this young man has set his face firmly against the shameless practices, and we have faith in him. He wants the Indians to know that he is their friend. If only they *could* be brought to believe this!" he added with marked fervor. "Then might this anticipated trouble never occur!"

"Why can they not be brought to believe it, uncle?" asked Caroline earnestly. "Surely there are those who can convince them."

"Plans to this effect are already on foot, Caroline, and messengers seeking terms of negotiation with the Indians have gone in various directions. But we have very little hope of their success. The trouble is that other governors have made similar proffers of friendship, have entered into compacts which were speedily disregarded, broken with no more compunction than a child would have in shattering a toy. Even were the ears of some of the best of the Indians gained, there would always be our alert enemy, the Spaniard, to set aside the good effect by assailing them with the recital of our broken faith."

"Yes, it is the Spaniards who are our bitterest foes," said Mrs. Ludwell; "from them that we are

to expect whatever of woe befalls us. The Indians will be but tools in their hands."

"Well, let us hope that this federation will fail as the others did," her husband said consolingly. "At any rate, we'll make our preparation to receive them. We'll not be caught off our guard."

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN HARRISON

ON parting the afternoon of the grape hunt Elizabeth's last words to Caroline had been :

“ Remember, you are to come to spend the day with me Thursday. I will send the bearers with the chair for you by nine o'clock. Don't be later than that if you can help it, dear, for I want a whole nice day with you all to myself.”

Thursday had come, and Caroline was now on her way to Crow's Nest. The bearers had arrived promptly, and she had kept them waiting but a few minutes, for Caroline was as eager for the “ whole nice day ” all to themselves as was Elizabeth.

The Hastings house was, next to that of the Landgrave, the most imposing in the Goose Creek settlement. The building was of stone and brick, two stories in height, and with a basement. It had been built at a later date than that of Laurel Hill, both workmen and material having been brought from England.

“It looks as strong as a fortress,” was Caroline’s comment to herself.

She had seen it twice before, but never had its strength so impressed her as on this morning. Like those of her uncle’s dwelling, the window shutters and doors were heavily sheeted with iron. But it had what the house at Laurel Hill lacked, an abundance of well-protected port-holes, and they were found on every side of the building.

“In case of an Indian attack,” commented Caroline again, “it would be as safe as the blockhouse, even safer, for it could not so easily be set on fire.” In this she was right.

Caroline descended from the chair at the beginning of a wide brick walk leading to a flight of stone steps. On mounting the steps she found herself in a massive portico of brick, which gave entrance to a wide, deep hall with a floor of polished oak. But Caroline observed no further, for here she was clasped in Elizabeth’s arms, who, between the hugs and kisses, showered upon her words of delight at her prompt appearance. Then she led her away to her own room to make such changes in her toilet as she desired ere presenting her to her mother.

Mrs. Hastings had much of her daughter’s cordiality of manner, and her reception of Caroline was such as warmed the young girl’s heart instantly.

"It is too bad!" exclaimed Elizabeth as they were back again in her own room. "I had planned to keep you all to myself for most of the day; had even coaxed mother into letting us have our dinner here, with just Dinah to attend us. But now the arrangement has all gone criss-cross. For, just a few moments before you came, father called me into his room to say that Captain Harrison would be here to dinner to-day, and that he especially desired me to be present."

"Captain Harrison," repeated Caroline as she put her fingers to her forehead as though trying to recall something. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"Oh, I dare say it sounds familiar because your uncle, and no doubt Charles and Philip, too, have spoken it in your presence more than the once. Captain Harrison is a person of considerable consequence. Ever since this Indian trouble began we have been hearing about him. He seems to be some special agent of the Governor and Council. At any rate, as my father says, he does not have to stop and ask permission ere taking important steps."

"He must indeed be a person of consequence to be able to do that," agreed Caroline. Then a sudden light kindling in her face, she added, "Ah, now

I remember! I have heard both uncle and Charles mention him. Uncle met him not long ago when he was on a visit to Po-ca-tal-i-go, the Indian council town. It seems that Captain Harrison was there on some mission to the Indians. Uncle said he had wonderful influence with the red men."

"That he has. Father asserts that he has done more than any other man in the colony to keep down the trouble, and his brave deeds have been so many that Anthony regards him as quite a hero. I have had much curiosity to see him, though," she added, giving Caroline's cheek an affectionate pinch, "I can't quite forgive him for breaking into our good times to-day."

"Then you have not seen him yet?"

"Nay, though I have heard so much of him, and he has been more than once in the neighborhood, I have not laid eyes on him. It seems he is somewhat mysterious in his movements, acting at times as though he does not want it known where he is and what he is doing. He often goes about with only a negro servant. His servant is the only one with him to-day. My father has remonstrated with Captain Harrison because of the peril to which he exposes himself; but he declares that the Indians will not harm him."

When they descended they found Anthony in the

rear of the hall busily attending to the priming of his musket. He had called to them as they came down the stairs. His face was flushed and he was much excited. He almost dropped his weapon in his eagerness to greet them with the news. He passed a good-morning to Caroline, bowing with his usual grace, then assailed Elizabeth:

“Sister, did you know that Captain Harrison is here? That he is to dine with us to-day? Just to think of it! the greatest woodsman in the country, the finest shot in all Carolina, the man who knows every Indian language—here—in *this very house!*”

“Why, Anthony, you are more excited than if it were the Governor or the Landgrave.”

“He is a greater man than either,” declared Anthony stoutly. “Father is certain that if Captain Harrison is given the time he will have the Indian trouble settled beyond a doubt. The Governor believes in him, too. He has given him unlimited authority to proceed as he thinks best.”

“Oh, I do hope that he can succeed in quelling the trouble!” exclaimed Elizabeth. “But I knew, Anthony, that he was here,” she continued. “Father had already told me. I am truly anxious to see this Captain Harrison of whom so much has been told me. But I must admit that I did not at first receive

this summons to dinner very graciously, because I had planned to have this day with Caroline all to ourselves."

" 'Tis well then you have come at our father's request, for methinks Mistress Caroline would never have forgiven you for keeping her from a sight of Captain Harrison."

" Is then a sight of this great Captain Harrison of so much consequence?" began Caroline mischievously. But here she stopped, for a door not far away had suddenly opened, and, unobserved, Mr. Hastings and another gentleman had approached the young people, answering the summons to dinner.

An exclamation from Elizabeth arrested Caroline, who paused in great confusion. For there could be no doubt as to who was the gentleman beside Mr. Hastings. Fortunately for Caroline's peace of mind, he had not heard. He was too much engrossed in conversation.

Mr. Hastings was opposite to them ere he looked up and saw the young people. A smile broke over his face.

" Ah, there you are, my children!" he cried. " Come here and meet Captain Harrison."

Anthony did not need an introduction, and the manner in which he grasped and pressed the Cap-

tain's hand declared as eloquently as words the youth's enthusiastic regard.

As Caroline advanced to be presented to Captain Harrison she was conscious of a pair of very bright eyes keenly regarding her. But in a moment they were veiled beneath long lashes, as the gentleman bowed with winning grace in acknowledgment of the somewhat shy courtesy she dropped him.

"The lass is the niece of James Ludwell, our neighbor at Laurel Hill," said Mr. Hastings.

"A noble man," spoke Captain Harrison heartily; "one of the best we have in the Province."

Caroline's face glowed at this tribute to her uncle. If Captain Harrison sought her regard, he could have taken no surer way.

"Thank you, sir," she said simply, as she raised her eyes now fully to his.

It took her but an instant to note that this Captain Harrison had a most engaging countenance, and that his manner was as winning as his face. The features were well cut, though the nose was somewhat prominent. His eyes, light blue in color, were bright, even sparkling. When he looked down, as he had in that moment after being introduced to Caroline, the long lashes lay against his cheeks like fringes of fine black silk.

He was a younger man than Caroline had sup-

posed, and was little more than medium height, yet he carried himself with such a fine military air it made him seem much taller.

His dress betokened the woodsman, though his manners were far too superior for that of a common denizen of the forest. His surcoat of dark blue cloth fitted him to perfection. It was open at the bosom, displaying the shirt of fine cambric beneath. At the waist it was confined by a belt of highly wrought wampum, with receptacles for knife and pistols. Closely fitting trousers of nankeen, leggings, and buskins similar to those worn by the Indians completed his attire.

"My father has not told you all that this maid is," said Elizabeth brightly, as she, too, had made her courtesy to Captain Harrison.

"Why, what is that, Elizabeth, in which I have failed to give information?" quickly asked her father, his eyes inquiringly upon her.

"You have not told Captain Harrison that it was our Caroline here who saw and overheard the two men we believe to have been Spanish spies."

"Why, sure enough! Yet I would have come to it directly, for 'twas about that very thing we have just been conversing."

"So this is the maid?" asked Captain Harrison, gazing at Caroline with awakened interest. "You

must tell me all about it, young mistress," he added earnestly, "when we have finished dining."

"Which means that you are too hungry now to listen, Captain Harrison?" queried Mr. Hastings with pleasant banter in his voice.

"Precisely. To a man who hasn't tasted of appetizing food since a week ago yesterday, the temptation to hear exciting incident is not so strong as 'twould otherwise be. But after we have made a good meal, Mistress Caroline, then it will interest me greatly to hear the information you have to give."

He bowed again to Caroline, smiling as he did so, with a glow in his face that made her heart grow warm towards him.

"You have not tasted wholesome food in more than a week!" ejaculated Mr. Hastings in deep perturbation. "Why did you not tell me earlier? I never would have detained you so with that conversation. Just think how heartless it makes me appear!"

"Nay, reproach not yourself, Master Hastings. I was even more solicitous than you concerning those matters we had under discussion. Truly was I so engrossed I forgot my own hunger."

"Friend! friend!" exclaimed Mr. Hastings in deep concern, "why do you expose yourself to all

these privations? Why leave the comforts of a home, such as I know you have, for the hardship and suffering of the Indian camps, the fatigues and perils of the swamps?"

With a quick gesture Captain Harrison turned toward him. His hand was uplifted as though he would stay the words. But, realizing that they had been spoken, he exclaimed in a voice tremulous with emotion:

"Nay, nay, call them not hardships and sufferings. This and much more would I do for Carolina!"

When the meal had been eaten, and they were gathered in the hall, Captain Harrison very carefully, and with intense earnestness, questioned Caroline concerning the two men she had seen and overheard in the thicket the day of the grape hunt.

"I am sure they were Spaniards, sir. They spoke the language with too much ease to have been otherwise."

"And to think they have escaped us!" exclaimed Captain Harrison, his eyes flashing. "The wretches! how much would I not give to lay my hands on them!"

"So, too, said my uncle," remarked Caroline. "He was mightily wrought up over it, sir, when they escaped."

"I think we all were," declared Mr. Hastings. "Nothing has occurred of late to so stir us. Apart from the danger that hung over you young people was the maddening thought that these men had been doing their work while we were in the dark."

"Is there still the thought that such was the case?" asked Captain Harrison.

"To a certain extent, yes; though naught has since transpired to give us ground for believing that they really distributed arms and ammunition among the Indians."

"Well, despite this feeling, you cannot exercise too great a vigilance." He paused, then with increased earnestness continued:

"As I came by the blockhouse to-day I was pained to see it not only in a state of neglect, but of actual decay. This should not be, especially as the Governor some days ago sent an imperative order that it must at once be put in thorough repair."

At the words Mr. Hastings flushed somewhat guiltily, and hastened to say:

"I deserve in part your censure, Captain, for I, too, have been dilatory, in that I expected some time ago to begin repair with the help only of my neighbor, James Ludwell, yet have not. When we saw the indifference of the others, we made vow to pro-

ceed with it ourselves. But, alas! we, too, have tarried in the good work. Now I am resolved that not another sun shall see the fort as it is now. This very evening I shall make the arrangements for beginning the work at sunrise to-morrow."

"Do so," urged Captain Harrison with much earnestness. Then he added, a smile breaking slowly over his face:

"I dare say Governor Craven is making himself very taxing as well as tiresome to you men of Goose Creek by the number of orders he transmits. It must seem very arbitrary for him to say, 'Do that, do this; go here, go there,' without giving but little explanation."

"Say not so," spoke Mr. Hastings quickly. "We know that our Governor has only the interests of his people at heart. What he does is done for their good. We can never doubt Governor Craven's loyalty to Carolina and the Carolinians."

"It should rejoice his heart to hear that."

"Then you expect to tell him?"

"Assuredly. Why should I not?"

"Nay, there is no reason why you should not tell him. We want him to know of the high regard in which he is held. The people of Goose Creek especially have full confidence in the Governor's wisdom and good faith."

"Captain Harrison," asked Caroline suddenly, "you know Governor Craven well, do you not?"

He did not reply at once. It seemed that he hesitated. Perhaps he did not want it known how very close to the Governor he really stood. However, in another moment he answered quite heartily:

"That I do, young mistress; yea," he added, while his eyes glowed upon her, "there is no one who knows him better."

"I have heard that he is very good and very wise; that the people have more faith in him than in any governor Carolina has yet had."

"Say not all that, young mistress. You would make him feel keen reproach did he hear you. The Governor has his failings, as other men. But of one thing rest assured——" His voice seemed to break here, but, as though mastering it, he went on: "Whatever may be the errors of the head, Charles Craven's heart in its every throb is true to Carolina."

"He certainly thinks much of the Governor," said Elizabeth to Caroline afterwards. "Did you notice how his eyes grew moist with feeling as he spoke of him?"

"Yes, I noted. But Captain Harrison no doubt has good reason to think highly of the Governor, since he puts so much trust in him."

CHAPTER X

A CRY IN THE NIGHT

DAYS of sorrow came again to Caroline. Plainly she saw the distance widening between herself and her cousins. For they had once more grown suspicious, then resentful of the deepening attachment between their mother and herself. Envious feelings, too, filled their hearts. They were not only reserved, but oftentimes surly.

“ ’Tis a shame,” they thought, “ that Caroline should push herself into our place with mother! Why can she not recognize that she has no right there? ”

In time Mrs. Ludwell as well as Caroline noted their behavior. It was impossible for her not to do so. However, neither of them set it down to the right cause. Mrs. Ludwell believed that the boys simply resented the restraint the presence of Caroline was upon them. If she could have known the truth how pained she would have been! How ashamed, too, for them!

While guessing the truth in part, Caroline had not

as yet a conception of their real feeling toward her.

The thought that she was a damper upon their pleasure, that they resented her presence in the family circle because of the restrictions it put upon them, gave her the keenest pain. How was she to convince them that she wanted things to be just as they had been before? that she expected them to act in a manner that was in no wise different from the old way? She made one or two attempts so to convince them, but failed so badly that she had no heart to try again. The knowledge that they looked upon her in the light of an intruder, that they were no doubt wishing she had never come, brought many bitter tears to Caroline. She would have been miserable indeed had she for one moment suspected the true state of the case, that they were accusing her to each other of seeking to alienate their mother's affections.

Once Caroline, losing control of herself, and feeling that she could no longer endure the torture, besought her aunt to beg her uncle to let her return to her friends in Barbados.

"I was happy there, in a measure," she said, "though nothing like my happiness here with you, *dear aunt!*" and, at the thought of all the happiness she was to leave behind if her uncle yielded to her

request, Caroline threw her arms about her aunt and burst into tears.

“*Could* you leave us, Caroline?” asked Mrs. Ludwell reproachfully.

“Oh, aunt, you know that I do not want to go, but it makes me so miserable to see how Charles and Philip look upon my being here.”

“Dear heart!” her aunt replied, tenderly soothing her, “you must not think of doing as you have proposed. I for one could not give you up; nay, I could not *now*, Caroline, since I have known the joy of having you——”

She bent her head until her lips were against Caroline’s ear, and the words she spoke made Caroline’s heart leap. She had said:

“My daughter!”

Caroline wound her arms still more closely about her aunt, and, looking up into the tender, beaming face, her own aglow with love, exclaimed:

“I know that I am dear to you, aunt, as you are to me. No daughter could be more tenderly beloved, nor could your own daughter love you more than I do. You and uncle have both been so good, so sweet to me that it wrings my heart even to entertain the thought of leaving you, but——”

“Then *why* think of it, Caroline?”

“Because, aunt, I can see that while I am happy, others are miserable. Charles and Philip——”

“Come, my Caroline, put not the matter so seriously, I pray you. These rough, spoiled boys of ours will soon get over their feeling of constraint toward you, I am sure. It is no more than this, believe me, dear. They are overcome at present by the bashful feeling of having a girl around, and it causes them to appear at such disadvantage; it gives you a wrong impression of them, too.”

“Oh, aunt, if I *could* but think this!”

“Then think it, dear, for it is true. I know these boys far better than you do,” and she smiled.

This assurance on the part of her aunt comforted Caroline greatly. She began to think that perhaps after all she had been mistaken. The boys, not having been used to a girl in the home circle, did feel ill at ease, not knowing how to adapt themselves to the new condition. She would make more earnest effort than ever to win their confidence, she resolved, to lead them to feel perfectly at ease in her presence. It filled her with joy to think that their attitude meant no more than constraint. What pain would have been hers to know the truth! She was soon to be enlightened.

The autumn passed away and winter had begun. The harvests were all gathered and the blockhouse

thoroughly repaired. Still there was no alarming movement on the part of the Indians. It is true that rumors had begun to come again, but none of them of a nature to be really disturbing.

During the days when the repairs on the block-house were in progress Caroline saw very little of Charles and Philip. For they lent their aid manfully in the work to be done, returning at nightfall as thoroughly worn out from real labor as any of the workmen. The boys were released from study now, for it was only during the spring and summer months that they attended the school taught by Dr. LeJau, the rector of the Goose Creek church.

"This evening we go to Crow's Nest," said Charles at the breakfast table, "for Anthony's birthday fête. What a glorious time we'll have."

"Yes! yes! bravo!" cried Philip. "We surely will enjoy ourselves."

Caroline had not seen them so animated for days. They even gave her beaming smiles, which caused her heart to leap suddenly. Were they really beginning again to regard her kindly?

"Cousin," said Charles, "I know that you, too, will enjoy it. Anthony's last birthday-party was the talk of the whole country."

"I am sure that I shall, Charles," she replied, returning his smile with one that brightened her

face so it made Charles inwardly exclaim that his cousin was really handsomer than he had thought.

"We can go in the chair," said Charles after a moment. "Daniel and three of the boat crew can act as bearers. But we must have 'Rastus and Jupe along to carry the torches, for the night will be dark till the moon comes up."

"But can the three of us occupy the chair?" asked Philip, and looked at his brother very dubiously.

"Yes," replied Charles quickly, "that we can. It will be rather close quarters, but 'twill be better than for one to ride horseback, as that one will be almost sure to get his clothes torn by the bushes."

He did not say so, but he was thinking about those beautiful lace ruffles his mother had so recently sewn into his coat of fine green cloth, and of the glossy ribbon bows that held in place the shining silver buckles of his pumps.

"How well you look, cousin!" exclaimed Charles as, dressed ready for the start to Crow's Nest, Caroline appeared.

"I do believe," declared Philip impulsively, "that you are going to be the best——" Here he paused. He had been on the point of saying "the best look-

ing girl there," but added instead, "the best dressed girl there."

"Thank you, Philip. It pleases me that you like my dress."

Caroline did indeed look well—strikingly handsome if she had but known it. But she did not know it, and that was the best of it.

The pink brocade gave added luster to her hair and eyes, and the soft quillings of lace about throat and sleeves were just the finishing touches needed. Her shining hair was drawn high upon her head and caught in place by a gold-rimmed comb. From beneath it two silken curls escaped to fall upon her shoulders. Her face was abloom, her eyes like stars. She was indeed a radiant vision.

Charles and Philip, resplendent in broadcloth coats cut in the prevailing fashion, with velvet knee breeches, silk stockings, the high-heeled, low-cut shoes of the times, kept bowing and smiling with all the grace of finished young gentlemen.

"That will do, my sons," their mother said smilingly. "See you not how you embarrass your cousin? Methinks she will have enough of this grand gentleman fol-de-rol to-night, without being overwhelmed by it ere she starts. Heed you not how she is blushing?"

But it was not from embarrassment, but from

pleasure, that Caroline blushed. If her aunt could but have known how hungry her heart was for even such notice as this!

“On the way to the party,” she said to herself, “I shall have the opportunity of saying some of the things that have been so long in my heart to say. Oh, can it be that at last we shall understand each other?”

Alas! no sooner had they entered the chair than an air of constraint fell upon Charles and Philip. They exchanged a few remarks with Caroline, then lapsed into silence, seeming to have entirely forgotten their gayety and freedom of manner of a few moments before. If they remembered it at all, it was no doubt with a feeling of regret that they had been so exuberant.

Caroline made brave effort to carry on a conversation, but finally gave up despairingly. Her heart sank. She wished again and again that she had not come. Would she ever be able to convince these two that she was but waiting to be taken as another comrade?

Sounds of music, of laughter, and the hubbub of voices greeted them as they neared the Hastings home. Light streamed from the doors and windows, while torches blazed without on the lawn and at intervals along the oak-bordered avenue.

Anthony was at the door to meet them, and also his father. Joyous greetings were exchanged by the young people.

Lights and music and flowers and moving forms were everywhere. They were no more than within the hall when Elizabeth appeared. She gave Caroline a warm embrace, then held her at arm's length.

"Why, how——" She was going to say "beautiful," but checked herself, adding instead, "how fine you are! Dear, that dress is so becoming!"

She felt obliged to say this; indeed, it came before she knew. Then she whisked Caroline away to her own room that her wrap might be laid aside and a few little tidying touches bestowed.

The furniture of the parlor had been placed along the walls, thus leaving the space in the center cleared for dancing and the old-fashioned games. The floor had been waxed till it glistened like a fine mahogany surface. An improvised gallery at one end served for the musicians. Candles glistened in silver sconces or had their light intensified within globes of glass. Flowers were in profusion and graceful festoons of evergreens.

"Mistress Caroline, you are to dance the first minuet with me," declared Anthony, approaching and bowing with so fine a grace it gave pleasure to

see him. "See! 'tis forming now," and he offered her his arm.

She went with him laughingly, and thinking to herself all the while what a finely favored young gentleman he was.

Charles was in the same minuet. He was dancing with Elizabeth and talking to her in the most animated tones. He seemed in extraordinary good humor, jesting with the boys and exchanging words of pleasantry with the girls. For Caroline alone he held silence. It was as though he suddenly became tongue-tied when in her vicinity. She could but notice it, and the weight fell again upon her heart. Another noted it, too. Anthony saw and wondered.

At the close of the minuet Anthony conducted Caroline to a seat near a window and went to bring her some refreshment.

There was no one in this particular corner, and, drawing the curtain aside, Caroline stepped within. Placing her arms on the broad ledge, she leaned forward, looking out into the night. She had stood thus but a few moments when she heard the noise of approaching feet, then words of conversation, as two girls seated themselves directly on the other side of the curtain.

"Do you see Caroline Percival in the room?"

asked a voice which she recognized as that of Sarah Blake.

"Nay," was the reply. "I think she has gone to the refreshment room with Anthony Hastings."

At this point Caroline was about to move to let them know of her presence, when the next words held her as by a spell.

"Have you heard that there has trouble arisen between Charles and Philip and their cousin?"

"Nay, I have not!" in surprised tones. "What is it?"

"I have discovered that they are very jealous of her; that they believe she has supplanted them in their mother's affection. Did you ever hear of anything so foolish? Ought they not to be chastised as any bad children should? Charles is especially bitter against his cousin. He has said things to me he had no business to say, and so I have told him."

"That was brave of you, but no more than was right," said the other commendingly.

"Caroline is such a dear girl," continued Sarah. "I don't believe she would condescend to such an underhanded thing as to come between those boys and their mother, even supposing that Madam Ludwell would let her do it, which isn't at all likely. She really is very fond of Caroline though, and Caroline deserves it."

“She is a sweet girl. I liked her the moment I saw her.”

“She is more than that. Let me tell you what she did for me. She saved my life. Oh, it was a brave thing! But there is Elizabeth beckoning to us. I will tell you as we go.”

They arose and walked away and left Caroline feeling as though everything within her had turned icy cold. Was it possible that she had heard aright?

Sick and faint Caroline leaned against the window ledge. What was it she had heard? That Charles and Philip were jealous of her because they believed that she had come between them and their mother? Could it be possible? Had not her ears played her some trick? But no; Sarah’s words had been plain enough. And Sarah had not spoken from hearsay. She declared that Charles had made the complaint to her, and that she had reproved him.

Like the sudden turning of a flood of light, wherein hidden objects are made vivid and distinct, Caroline now saw clearly many things hitherto obscured; things that had both troubled and mystified her. All along the uneasy feeling had been with her that there was something of a graver nature than mere awkwardness and constraint in the behavior of her cousins toward her. Now how plainly she read it all! Their actions, inexplicable before,

were fully explained. Oh, how could they thus regard her? How could they do her the injustice to charge so mean a thing against her? At the thought her cheeks burned and her heart leaped in passionate protest. How could they? How could they? Overcome by the thought she leaned her head against the framing of the window, and the hot tears rolled down her cheeks.

It was thus that Anthony found her as he returned with the refreshments.

The moment she became aware of his presence, she made hasty effort to dry her tears, but partly succeeding. He caught a glimpse of them still glistening on her lashes. The reddened eyes, too, had a tale to tell. But with rare good tact and thoughtfulness he forbore to question her or to embarrass her in any way by appearing to notice.

He set the salver with its dainties upon the broad ledge, and sought to tempt her with each in turn. But she barely tasted of one or two. When he rallied her on her poor appetite, she tried to return him a smile, but it was so sad a one it made him feel suspiciously near to tears himself.

"I fear that Mistress Caroline is not happy at Laurel Hill," he said later to his sister. "Do you think now that Charles or Philip could have anything to do with it?"

"It is the boys who are the cause of it, I am sure," declared Elizabeth, so soon as Anthony had told her of finding Caroline in the window seat crying. "I could shake them both and with good relish. They started out by resenting her coming because she was a girl. Did you ever hear of anything so absurd? Suppose now you shouldn't want *me* about, Anthony, for the same reason."

"Such a 'suppose' is altogether out of the question," he replied loyally, as, leaning over her, he kissed her warmly.

"Charles and Philip have gotten it into their heads," continued Elizabeth, "that Caroline is taking their place with their mother. Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous? I am just waiting to give them a piece of my mind."

"I must speak to them, too," said Anthony quickly. "'Tis a shame if such be the case! Are you sure, Elizabeth, that it is?"

"Quite sure. But, Anthony, don't you open your mouth to them. Be careful now. They will take it with much better grace from me."

"Very well, sister, if you think it for the best. But 'tis hard for me to keep from speaking to Charles at least. I noted his behavior in the minuet and wondered. Now that I know the cause, I am itching to tell him what I think."

Elizabeth had re-entered the parlor in the search for Charles. She had just spied him and was making her way toward him, when she saw Caroline approaching. This was not what she desired at the moment. Still, she could not turn away. There was that in her friend's face that forbade. She had just reached out her hand to grasp Caroline's, when there came a loud and piercing cry from without. Then another, and mingled with this hoarse shouts, and following them a pandemonium of sounds. Feet were heard rushing upon the piazza; groans, cries, and screams issued from the negroes. There were prayers, too—words of agonized entreaty.

The panic spread to those within the house. They caught the sounds and felt the impending calamity, but knew not its nature. Terrified faces were seen on all sides.

Suddenly, while all waited in more or less of terror, Ephraim, one of the Hastings servants, came plunging through the hall and into the room where most of the young guests were assembled. His shirt was open at the throat, his great black chest heaving beneath. His eyes bulged with fright.

"De Injuns!" he cried. "De Injuns! Oh, my chillern, my pretty dears, what's to become o' you dis night, my darlin's? De Injuns is comin'! Dey ain't more'n a mile an' a ha'f away. I see 'em wid

my own eyes, honeys; so, too, did Jupe and Neb'lus; yes, an' Marse Art'er Crogan, who ain't fur behin'!"

Mr. Hastings by this time had grasped Ephraim and was shaking him with no light hand.

"Idiot!" he cried, "do you not see how you are frightening these young people? Cease your babbling! Why did you not come to me first? What is all this hue and cry with reference to approaching Indians? You have been asleep and dreaming!"

"Nay, massa," cried poor frightened Ephraim, "I tells you nothin' but de trufe! I see dem Yam'-sees wid my own eyes. Dar's Marse Art'er Crogan now. Ax him, massa."

The young man who had now appeared in their midst was himself pale and much excited. He breathed hard, too, as from rapid running.

"It is true, Master Hastings," he said in response to Ephraim's quick appeal. "I fear the Indians will soon be upon us. I saw them preparing for the attack. Let all who can make for the blockhouse."

"Nay," interposed Mr. Hastings, "'tis now safer here," and began at once to issue orders for the closing of doors and windows.

A panic had seized the young guests. They were rushing hither and thither. Some were crying that they must go home despite the danger; that they

cared not for safety themselves if their loved ones were exposed. Others again were too hysterical to have any fixed purpose.

As she stood in the midst of these terror-stricken ones, her own face ashen in hue, her limbs trembling, Caroline was conscious of Charles and Philip rushing by her. In an instant she seemed to divine their intention, and, without a moment's hesitation, turned and sped after them. She overtook Charles, and grasped him by the shoulder.

"Wait," she entreated. "Slacken your speed a little, I beseech you, for I desire to go with you."

Charles reached upward, dislodged her hand, and, pushing her somewhat rudely from him, said:

"Stay where you are and save yourself. 'Tis the *safer* place, I assure you. We go to those who have a claim upon us."

The cruel words stung Caroline to the quick, but she paid no heed to the injunction to remain and save herself.

The negroes were thronging up the steps, seeking refuge in the house. The most of them were still crying and wringing their hands. So frightened were they that their rush for the house was in the nature of a stampede. They had been ordered to the cellars, and two or three of the white men were endeavoring to drive them around to the back en-

trance. But so demoralized were they through terror that they were beyond obeying orders at that moment.

How Caroline ever made her way through this maddened throng she never knew. It seemed to her more than once that she must assuredly be crushed to death. But through some nobler instinct, well defined in their tender hearts, despite that they stood as they believed close to death, they made way for her as best they could.

When Caroline found herself in the open air it was to see Charles and Philip going at their utmost speed down the paved walk between the lines of flaring pine-knot fires.

She looked about her. The chair was there beside the walk, but not a bearer appeared in sight. They, too, no doubt, were with that frenzied crowd seeking to enter the house.

Again Caroline raised her head and looked about her. Behind her was the house, its eyes of light fast closing upon the mass of black humanity almost within the haven for which they had struggled. The main doors were yet open. If she went back she might yet be safe. The house was indeed like a fortress, and there were many to defend it. Before her lay the blackness of the woods and the terrors of the journey through them. If she persisted

in going now, it would be alone, since Charles and Philip had refused to wait for her. With only a moment's hesitation she turned her back upon the light, upon the fortress of safety, and began to run with all her speed toward the black gulf of the woods.

CHAPTER XI

FLIGHT AND RESCUE

ON sped Caroline down the box-lined walks, past the rows of sentinel-like oaks with their swaying pendants of moss, out into the dread and darkness of the night. What forms might soon start up beside the way she knew only too well. How near were the Indians? Perhaps even then surrounding the premises. She strained her ears, but could catch no sound of an alarming nature. Doubtless they had changed their tactics and would creep upon their victims as the wild beast creeps, in silence.

Beyond the oaks were the densely set trees of the forest, the thick-foliaged gums and bays, the somber pines, and the well-nigh impenetrable coppices of laurel and myrtle. Through the forest ran a beaten path. Did she know its turnings? Would her feet keep to the sure way, or would they turn aside into the intricate windings of the forest? Would she be lost in the jungle? or, worse still, wander upon the marsh, to be caught hard and fast in its quagmire?

She believed that she could find the way, though she had taken little note of it as they came along. Yet she had an idea as to the direction.

The breeze had stiffened, the swaying branches of the trees seemed like long arms warning her back from the peril of the way. Fear had possession of her, yet greater than this fear was the mad desire to speed, as the wind speeds, to an object beloved. If aught of harm befall that one so dear, then must it reach her, too. She would accept no safety if it did not also include this one who had brought into her sad and lonely life the one fervent love that it knew. There was affection, too, for her uncle, deep and strong, for he had been wondrously gentle and kind. She wanted also to be with him, to share whatever of peril was to come. But mightier than all was this longing to reach and throw herself into the arms of the best beloved, to twine her own arms about the dear neck and to whisper the assurance that whatever came they would take it together.

As she sped onward through the night a sudden, stinging memory came to her. So great was the force of the pain it brought that she halted quickly in the midst of the path, flinging her arms above her head with a gesture of passionate protest. Then a moan escaped her, and her face was white and drawn in the moonlight. Charles had pushed

her from him. He had spoken words that had cut her as a knife. He and Philip had love's debt to pay. There were dear ones awaiting *them*, loved ones with whom the peril must be shared. For *her* there was naught of this. Let her stay at the great house, fortress-like in its security, and save herself. The words rang in her ears now; the wound rankled as though the knife were still there. Oh, how could he? How could he? Cruel, cruel to stab her thus!

She bit her lip while a passionate cry escaped her. Her eyes were wide and dark in the moonlight, and they were tearless. The tears were in her heart. With another gesture of protest, she threw her hands upward again and resumed her flight.

She was swift of foot, a good runner usually, and that same Juan Silvo, of whom we have heard much, had trained her to endurance in the race. But her long, clinging skirts impeded her progress. The high heels of her slippers, too, came near tripping her again and again. At length she stooped down, and removing them, flung them away. They were already torn and bedraggled. She ran on now, her silken hose wet with the dews of the night, rent by the brambles that beset the way. Her feet, too, were torn and bleeding, but she heeded not. The chill air penetrated her clothing, but she was scarcely conscious that she shivered. In her haste she had

waited for no wrap. Her dark hair had slipped from its fastenings. It lay in waves upon her shoulders. The gold-rimmed comb fell beside the path unheeded. On she sped with the frantic swiftness of the deer that hears the hunter's cry. She put forth all her strength. Every nerve was at tension, yet it seemed to her that she did but creep.

The sky was flooded with stars and there was the soft quiver of a waxing moon. But the woods were silent and deep and black. What lurking forms were concealed therein? How many moments would it be ere she felt the falling of a terrible hand upon her shoulder, and beheld in the misty light the cruel, mocking face so close to her own? Would there be only the one or many? Oh, she prayed, if Heaven would only be kind! If no unfriendly eye might look upon her in her flight! no savage hand stay her! If only she could reach love's goal in safety.

The moonlight served to show her the path as its way was marked by a slight opening between the trees. But beyond it on either side stretched the impenetrable shadows of the forest. Even in the moon-flecked path objects were indistinct.

Suddenly, with a startled cry, she sprang aside. There was the noise as of the movement of a body in the underbrush beside the way. Had that which

she dreaded come at last? Was the terrible hand reaching out toward her from the darkness? With an exclamation of relief she beheld a small animal dash across her path and go scurrying away through the black tunnel of the forest. It was as frightened as herself.

She paused now in her flight, a sense of utter loneliness, of the threatened perils of the way well-nigh overwhelming her. The moonlight, flickering upon the leaves, cast an uncertain, bewildering light. Its twinkle for the moment hurt her eyes, confused her sense of vision. She put her hand above her eyes, making a screen of it, from under which she peered out along the dim and silent spaces of the forest. That is, there seemed to be spaces, but when she turned to the right, then to the left, and finally sought again to go forward, an impenetrable thicket walled her in on every side. There was the sting, too, of thorns, the sharp spines of brambly cactuses. Where was the beaten path? How had she lost it? Where, too, was the aperture by which she had entered?

Again and again she sought to find her way, but each time it was to realize with despair that the thick tangles of briars and undergrowth inclosed her as a wall that could not be scaled.

A great fear seized her. Her heart began to

beat wildly. The sound of roaring waters was in her ears. Was she indeed lost in the forest? Were the encompassing terrors of that night to be faced alone, far away from that goal her love had sought with such swift wings?

With a cry to Heaven for succor, she put forth all her effort, and sought yet again to find some outlet from her forest prison. This time she was more fortunate, for, stooping low, she descried an opening made no doubt by some animal burrowing through the hedge. On the other side she arose to her feet to find sufficient space about her to move on with ease. It was a grove of small saplings into which she had come and about them there was little undergrowth. Still she could not find the path. She was lost, she now felt assured.

If only she could hear the waters of the creek! She might then follow its bank. She would know her uncle's landing when she came to it. She had proceeded but a short distance when, to her great joy, she heard the murmuring of the creek, the soft lapping of the breeze-stirred waves against its banks.

She gave expression to words of thanksgiving. But in that very moment, when the entrancing tones of Hope began to call to her through the voice of the purling water, a form started up from the underbrush beside her, and another, and another! She

needed no clearer light to show her the horror of her situation. She was surrounded by Indians. Her heart turned cold within her. A dizziness seized her. She would have fallen but that a hand was outstretched to stay her. Even in the midst of her agony, the surprise came that it was no rough hand.

She had closed her eyes, expecting to feel the next instant the keen thrust of the scalping-knife or the stroke of the terrible tomahawk. But instead a hand drew her gently upward, and as gently though firmly supported her, while a voice not altogether unfamiliar spoke a musical language in her ear. The language, too, she had heard before, though only a word or so was now comprehensible. She heard, "Poor white dove!" Then, "Whither flies it with drooping wing through the chill, dark night?"

Her heart leaped with a mad joy. She felt as though she could shout aloud in her gratitude. For the hand that held her, the voice that spoke to her were O-co-nos-tee's!

Yes, it was O-co-nos-tee, and the Indians with him were friendly Indians.

"It is the white dove," he said again. "She who has magic in her touch. What drives her to the forest at this time of night?"



She was surrounded by Indians. — Page 156.

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"It is you, O-co-nos-tee!" she cried. "Oh, how glad I am!"

She held his hand now and was pressing it in her joy.

He looked at her wonderingly; but he asked her no more questions. It was not his way. When she chose, she would tell him.

"Come," he said, and again clasped her gently by the hand.

She thought that he meant that he would lead her through the intricacies of the forest to the goal she had striven with all her energies to reach through the terrors of the night, a night that would be forever memorable. Would they still be in time? Dared she hope this now after all the precious moments that had been wasted in her wanderings?

"Home!" she cried. "O-co-nos-tee, you will carry me home?"

To her astonishment he shook his head.

"Nay," he said. "Speak to White Chief first."

She saw now that he was leading her toward a camp fire. She had not noticed it before. But, as they had advanced some paces, she beheld it plainly. Men were gathered about it; some sitting, others standing. To her dismay, she saw that they were Indians, all but one. That one, as soon as he caught sight of her, started up with a sharp exclamation.

"Mistress Caroline! Mistress Caroline!" cried a familiar voice.

It was Captain Harrison.

She sprang towards him and grasped his hand.

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Caroline, "'tis a fearful

His eyes noted in wonder her bedraggled attire, her bare head, the hair falling in disordered masses upon her shoulders.

He led her to a fallen log near by, then, as he seated himself beside her, he asked with grave concern:

"What ill fortune has overtaken you, young mistress, that you fly to the forest like some frightened animal the hunters chase?"

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Caroline, "'Tis a fearful thing that has befallen this night!"

As coherently as she could, as rapidly, too,—for there was still sorely pressing upon her the terrible fear that she would yet be too late,—she told him the story of the Indian alarm.

He let her conclude, though once or twice he seemed on the point of interrupting her.

"Poor child!" he said, when she had finished, "you have indeed supped with horrors. But there was no need of all this fright. The negro was crazy and Crogan even more of an idiot."

He paused, then ejaculated in deep vexation:

"I could chastise them both with great relish! There are no unfriendly Indians at hand. What the idiots saw was a band of Muscogeese at their tribal dance."

"Can this be true?" cried Caroline. "Oh, tell me, sir, that my ears do not deceive me, that I hear aright!"

"'Tis all true, young mistress. The Indian alarm was false."

O-co-nos-tee and his young Indians were to conduct her home. Captain Harrison would have liked to accompany her himself, but he was on a mission, he told her, that could not wait.

While the Indians were making ready their canoe, for the journey was to be made by the creek, Captain Harrison pressed food upon Caroline. She managed to partake of a small amount, but her nerves were still too unstrung for her appetite to be keen.

In a half-hour the canoe was ready. Caroline was surprised to hear that it was full three miles to her uncle's landing. How far she had gone out of her way in that wild flight through the darkness!

The canoe, hollowed out of a cypress log, slender and graceful in proportions, was drawn upon the bank. The Indians quickly launched it, taking their

places within and steadying it against the bank by means of their paddles.

Captain Harrison himself helped Caroline to her seat in the canoe, again expressing his regret that he could not accompany her.

The moon had now gone down, and there was only the misty light of the stars to guide them; but the Indians seemed to have eyes that could see through the darkness. Certain it was that they directed their course as though they knew the way perfectly, every curve of the stream, every jutting point, every dot-like island.

The canoe moved on almost noiselessly. Beneath glided the black water with low, murmuring sound. Now and then overhanging vines brushed against them, and several times they came so near the thickets of myrtle and cedar that, had there been skulking forms of enemies therein, the inmates of the canoe would assuredly have fallen an easy prey. But Captain Harrison had assured Caroline that between her and her uncle's home there would be no danger from hostile Indians.

One thought sorely disturbed Caroline. Suppose that her uncle and his family, alarmed by the news of the Indian raid, had sought the blockhouse. That meant another journey of almost two miles, a part of it through the well-nigh trackless forest.

She was already greatly fatigued from what she had undergone that night. Her limbs ached and there was a heaviness in her head. She felt that she could scarce drag through another journey by foot.

She was troubled, too, with reference to the reception which they would meet, in the event that the house was fortified. Would it not be exceedingly dangerous to attempt to approach under such circumstances? Might they not be fired upon ere they could make themselves known?

On speaking to O-co-nos-tee of this fear he reassured her.

“Be not troubled, White Dove,” he said. “The sons of the White Mother know the call of O-co-nos-tee.” Distracted as she was, Caroline admired the reverently poetic name for Mrs. Ludwell.

In the meantime, Charles and Philip had sped homeward along the path they knew so well. Many times their feet had pressed it. Every little curve in the trail, every opening in the trees was familiar. The dark shadows did not confuse them, nor the trunks of the closely growing trees turn them from the way.

Hatless, with clothing torn and disarranged, their faces expressive of a terrible fear, they burst into the presence of father and mother.

“The Indians!” cried Charles as well as he could between his gasps for breath. “The Indians are upon us! The messengers came while we were in the midst of our enjoyment. Oh, it is a terrible time at Crow’s Nest!”

“The Indians!” cried Mrs. Ludwell, as her face, too, went deadly white.

“Yes, the Indians!” repeated Charles. “They are really upon us. Both Master Hastings’ Ephraim and Master Crogan saw them.”

“They came with all speed to Crow’s Nest with the tidings,” added Philip. “The Indians, they said, were not more than two miles away.”

“Can this be true?” asked Mr. Ludwell.

He looked incredulous. He had put his arm about his wife, and was seeking to reassure her.

“I think,” he continued, “there must be some mistake. I was out with the patrolling squads this afternoon. Up to sunset no unfriendly Indians had been seen in any direction.”

“Oh, father, be not so hard to convince,” pleaded Charles. “Let us not lose precious time, but make ready for them. Ephraim surely must have seen them. He was well-nigh dead with fright. But even if he were mistaken, Master Crogan could not have been.”

“I pray you, James, heed the warning,” urged

his wife. She was still very pale and her lips were trembling. "Shall we not start at once for the blockhouse?"

"Nay, if 'tis really an Indian alarm, which I still doubt, even in the face of the evidence, we would not have time to reach the fort. We'll make what preparations we can here. Philip, go blow the horn—the blasts that mean danger. While the servants are assembling, you and I, Charles, will close the barricades and make ready the ammunition."

"What became of Caroline?" his mother now asked of Charles.

"She is *safe* at Crow's Nest."

There was the least bit of insinuation in Charles' tone.

His mother noted it, but she gave no sign that she did.

"You mean that she *preferred* to remain? Well, that was sensible. I was afraid that she might attempt to follow you and Philip. This would be more like Caroline."

Charles hesitated. His better nature was prompting him to tell his mother of the scene with Caroline, when she had begged to accompany them and he had rudely pushed her aside. It was the remembrance now of this rudeness that suddenly crimsoned his face. How very rough he had been with his

cousin! He could not tell his mother of his behavior, yet he must exonerate Caroline. It would be shameful to let even the slightest impression of cowardice rest upon her.

"It was not Cousin Caroline's *choice* to remain, mother," he hastened to say. "She wished to come with us; but I—but I—I did not think she ought, and—and so advised her."

His hesitation was not unmarked by his mother. Had Charles *forced* Caroline to remain, and was he unwilling to admit it? Well, if he had so acted, it was assuredly because he thought it best, and he need not be ashamed of it. She started to tell him so, but changed her mind, saying instead:

"I thought Caroline's impulse would be to come with you. Do you know, Charles, that for some moments after you and Philip entered, I kept watching the door expecting to see her? Even now I can't get over the feeling that she may, after all, have persisted in following you."

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Charles, astonished; "surely Caroline will not do *that*! Should she attempt it, she would assuredly be lost in the dark woods, since she knows not the path."

"That is just what I fear," said Mrs. Ludwell, "and it would be so like Caroline."

There was a note of distress in her voice that

stirred a chord of jealousy in Charles' heart. How solicitous his mother was concerning Caroline!

Soon the frightened servants, white and black, were congregated within the house. The overseer, too, and his family came. Everything was made as secure as possible.

The minutes passed, a half-hour, then an hour, and still there were no signs of Indians. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. If they had fallen upon Crow's Nest the boom of the muskets, the shouts of the Indians would assuredly have reached the ears of those at Laurel Hill.

"I think it has proven as I at first thought," said Mr. Ludwell, "a false alarm. Heaven be praised that it has! We can now relax our vigilance."

Another hour passed, and still the night remained silent, yet to reassure his wife and other timid ones Mr. Ludwell kept a sentry at each post. He was himself on duty at the front door with Charles to bear him company.

"Hist, father," said Charles suddenly. "I hear a sound. Some one is in the avenue, I am sure. What must we do?"

"Let us act cautiously," said Mr. Ludwell, "for it may not be an enemy. Can you see anything, my son?"

Charles, with his eyes glued to the port-

hole, gazed intently for a few seconds, then announced:

“Yes, father, I can make out a moving form or two, but as the day is only beginning to break, cannot see distinctly. Yet I feel sure that more than one person is approaching. They are proceeding very cautiously. Would it be safe to hail them, think you, sir?”

“Yes, Charles, I do. Friends or enemies, whichever they be, we can lose nothing by challenging them.”

Charles had just drawn his lips in shape for the challenge, when, clear and silvery, a whip-poor-will's call rang out.

The words he had upon his lips gave place to a joyous shout. In his excitement he almost dropped his musket.

“’Tis O-co-nos-tee, father!” he cried. “’Tis O-co-nos-tee! and those with him are no doubt his Indian friends. Shall we not unbar to them at once?”

“Yes, Charles, if you are *sure*.”

“Quite sure, father. There is the call again.”

He put his fingers to his lips, quickly responding to it.

Then as the great bar came down he called blithely:

“Come, friends, enter, for you are welcome.”

To his astonishment, a form came speeding up the steps, straight toward the door. Not so would O-co-nos-tee or any one of the young Indians with him proceed.

It was no man's figure, as he now plainly saw. *Could* it be? Ere he could answer his own question it was answered by another.

“Caroline!” cried Mrs. Ludwell. “Caroline, is it really *you*? Whence have you come, dear, and at this hour?”

Then as her arms closed about the young girl, and she drew her with a passionate gesture to her breast, she added:

“My dear one, how troubled I have been about you this night! And how rejoiced is my heart that you have come safely back to me—*my daughter!*”

The words were intended for Caroline alone, but another ear caught them. Charles, who was bending near, heard them plainly. He suddenly straightened himself as though a rough hand had brought him erect. A stab smote him. It was a pang of jealousy, the sharpest pang Charles had yet known. He turned and walked away. A look not pleasant to see had come into his eyes. His lips stiffened, and to himself he was saying, “My daughter! Yes, she said ‘My daughter!’”

CHAPTER XII

AN UNBIDDEN GUEST

THE morrow's sun looked upon a peaceful scene, a peacefulness all the more accentuated because of the terror and confusion that had reigned the night before. The good tidings had spread far and wide that the Indian alarm was a false one. Bars had been taken down, muskets put away, and doors and windows thrown open once more to the light. People breathed freely after the long, intense strain.

At Laurel Hill the scene was an especially peaceful one, for at Laurel Hill perhaps more than at any other place in the neighborhood the inmates felt assured of safety. For shortly after sunrise that morning a messenger had come from Captain Harrison with the intelligence that scouts sent out in every direction had failed to find anything amiss.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning. The breakfast had been eaten an hour ago, and the entire family was now gathered upon the piazza enjoying a respite from the harrowing cares of the night and drinking in the beauty of the scene. There was

just enough cold in the atmosphere to be bracing. The sunshine lay like a golden flood over everything. Its radiance, too, was in their hearts, the sunshine of joy that the dread of the night before had given place to this sweet scene of peace. In the branches of the laurels doves fluttered and cooed, while on the great limb of an oak near by a mocking-bird was making the air vibrant with the joyousness of his song. The balmy fragrance of flowers was borne to them from the garden, Mrs. Ludwell's especial pride, that lay to the right of the house. There was, too, the scent of roses wafted through the windows, for early that morning, while the dew was yet upon them, Caroline had gathered the choicest of the garden for the tall, high-shouldered vases. She had sung as she cut them, for her heart was full of lightness because of the precious words that had been whispered to her but a few hours ago. Ah, if she could have known of their opposite effect upon another heart, the song would have died upon her lips.

On receiving the assurance from Captain Harrison, Mr. Ludwell had succeeded in getting the negroes, without further protestation, to return to their quarters. The white servants had also been dismissed to theirs, while the overseer and his family had departed to their home.

Suddenly Philip gave a little shout.

"I see Master Hastings and Anthony! Oh, I am so glad they are coming! Now we shall learn of all that happened at Crow's Nest!"

Sure enough there were Mr. Hastings and Anthony coming up the broad, sandy drive. The former was in his chair, but the latter bestrode his pony. Anthony seemed in too exuberant spirits to be confined within the contracted limits of the chair.

He returned Philip's shout and Charles' very forceful gesture of delight. Then, springing from his pony, ran rapidly up the steps, showering good-mornings right and left, and bowing and smiling as he neared Caroline and Mrs. Ludwell, with the grace that so well became him.

Mr. Hastings followed at a much more dignified pace, but he was scarcely less glad to greet his old friends again. There was much to be said on either side with reference to that through which they had passed, and devout were their expressions of joy that nothing of a serious nature had occurred.

"It was a time of terror at Crow's Nest," said Mr. Hastings, "from the moment the alarm was sounded until the messenger arrived, bringing us the assurance that the Indians were not hostile ones, that they were merely indulging in their own festivities. We had all that we could do restoring

order among the negroes. It one time seemed as though it would be impossible to quell the riot. They were like a frenzied mob, and in their frenzy more than one was hurt. I have come this morning, James, to ask that you will send Comings, your medical man, over to assist mine, for there are many stitches to be taken and bruises to be dressed."

"That I will, Arthur," responded Mr. Ludwell heartily. "I am truly sorry that any of your black people were hurt, and I earnestly hope that none were seriously so."

"I think not," replied Mr. Hastings, "but it is a wonder that some of them were not torn limb from limb."

"How are you this morning?" Anthony asked of Caroline as he approached her. "We have been beside ourselves with wonder," he continued, after receiving her reply, "as to the manner in which you reached home last night. When we missed you and Charles and Philip we naturally supposed that you had succeeded in getting your chair all right and had swiftly departed for Laurel Hill. But this morning, when we found your chair beside the piazza, and counted every one of your bearers among our blacks, we knew not what to think."

"Our Caroline had a dreadful experience last night," said Mrs. Ludwell at this point, and there-

upon she related to him all that through which Caroline had passed.

Both Anthony and his father were greatly shocked, and they were giving expression to their dismay and sympathy, when Bion, the dog, who had heretofore lain outstretched, his head upon his paws, peacefully sleeping, began to growl threateningly.

"Why, what can ail Bion?" said Charles. "He acts as though he saw something he did not like."

"Come here, Bion," called Philip. "What ails you, old fellow?"

But the dog, instead of obeying, moved toward the steps, his nose pointing straight down the avenue, his bristles erect.

"There is some one at the gate," said Mr. Ludwell. "Three men on horseback, as well as I can make out. Do you not also see them now?" he asked of his wife and Mr. Hastings.

They soon admitted that they did. The horses were in plain view, but the men were not seen distinctly, as the branches of the great oak under which they had paused partially obscured them.

"Shut Bion up, Philip," said Mr. Ludwell at this point. "He seems strongly to object to the strangers. Then call Daniel that he may go and find out the names of our visitors and their business.

They are evidently making no move to enter, though it may be on account of Bion."

But even after the dog had been carried to the rear of the premises, the men still showed no disposition to enter the gate.

"It may be some of the patrol," continued Mr. Ludwell. "Yet, if such, it is strange that they do not approach the house, since Bion is on good terms with all of them."

Daniel soon returned with the information that they were a gentleman and his two servants, and that the gentleman desired speech with the master of Laurel Hill.

"Do not go," said Mr. Hastings, as Mr. Ludwell was rising. "We know not the tricks that may be played in these troublous times. Bid them enter and let them hold speech with you here."

"Yes, James," urged his wife, who had shown symptoms of uneasiness on hearing Mr. Hastings' words.

Daniel was again dispatched to the gate with the result that in a few moments the men were seen to enter and approach the house.

Mr. Ludwell went forward.

The gentleman introduced himself, stating that he had come from Charles Town, though it was not long since he had arrived there from England. His

name was Edward Fenwicke, and he was on the search for pelts of various kinds. He craved entertainment at the hands of the master of Laurel Hill for a few days. It was his desire to go shortly into the very heart of the Indian country, but ere he did so he wished to avail himself of such hints and suggestions as he could procure from the old traders of the Goose Creek vicinity, who knew the various Indian towns and the trails leading thereto as a scholar knew his books.

Mr. Ludwell was favorably impressed with the stranger. He had very affable manners, and he was faultlessly dressed; entirely too fastidiously, so Mr. Ludwell thought, for a man of his calling. But, no doubt, he had considerable means.

His baggage, he told Mr. Ludwell, was at the small inn, six miles away, whence he had that morning ridden. He had been there some days, but the accommodations of the inn were so exceedingly poor that he entreated the master of Laurel Hill to rescue him from them.

In courteous terms Mr. Ludwell bade him dismount. It was no unusual thing for strangers, those traveling about the country, to bespeak for themselves the hospitality of this noble home. It was well known that its kindly master opened wide his hand in entertainment, as did others of the set-

tlers along Goose Creek, nor would he receive payment from those whom he sheltered for a night or so at a time. Some even stayed for a week.

Mr. Ludwell had made it a rule to turn away no stranger of creditable appearance, for in that wild country he knew how difficult it was for those whose business carried them far away from home to find comfortable entertainment outside the homes of the better class.

Thus he extended his hand courteously now and bade the gentleman welcome to such as his house afforded. His servants, Mr. Ludwell added, could find housing with his own.

Daniel was called to take the horses and care for them, and to conduct the men to the quarters set apart for the white servants of the plantation.

This done, Mr. Ludwell conducted the stranger up the steps and into the piazza, introducing him to those gathered there.

The manners of the newcomer partook of the most finished courtesy. He seemed, too, of a charming temperament, full of gayety and good humor. He entered at once with admirable tact into a conversation that embraced every one. He especially made himself pleasant to Caroline, seeking to say such things as he could see touched upon matters of interest to her.

Mr. Hastings and Anthony were persuaded to remain to dinner, and a message to that effect was dispatched by Comings, Mr. Ludwell's medical man, who was at once sent to Crow's Nest.

The stranger made himself more than agreeable at the table. He was minded to praise everything set before him. The ham was boiled to a nicety few cooks could attain, while the pilau was such as he had not tasted since six years ago when he had been in France. This led Mr. Hastings to ask if he were not of French extraction. He was tall and dark and had the air of a foreigner. He admitted that his mother had been of French blood.

Ere the dinner was more than half advanced the conversation turned upon the all-absorbing topic, the hostile attitude of the Yamassees.

The stranger expressed great surprise at this information.

"I thought," he said, "that these Indians were the staunchest allies of the Carolinians. Did they not give valuable assistance to the whites during the North Carolina troubles?"

"They did," admitted Mr. Ludwell, "but now they are nearly all turned against us."

"The reason?"

"Dissatisfaction with reference to the allotment

of lands for one thing, and instigation of the Spaniards for another."

Mr. Fenwicke gave him a quick glance.

"Then you think the Spaniards are at the bottom of the present trouble?"

"We not only think it," interposed Mr. Hastings, "but we *know* it."

"And their object?"

"To gain Carolina for themselves."

"But I have heard that the Spaniards are not strong as to numbers; that there are many more reported as being at St. Augustine than are really there."

His eyes seemed intent upon his plate, but in reality he had Mr. Ludwell's face under furtive inspection. He lost not either a single expression of that of Mr. Hastings.

"So much the more reason, then, why they need the aid of the Indians," declared Mr. Ludwell. "If these poor creatures but knew it, they are to be used simply as cat's-paws by the Spaniards. When these men have accomplished their own ends by means of the Indians, they will then cast them off to shift for themselves."

A faint flush tinged the cheeks of the stranger, but it may have been from the warmth of the room.

"You paint the Spaniards in no enviable light," he said a little curtly.

"'Tis no more than is deserved," quickly returned Mr. Ludwell. "Covetousness has made them our implacable enemies."

"But as strongly fortified as are the Carolina colonists now, there surely can be no cause for serious apprehension."

The words were spoken with the inflection that denoted a question, though they may not have been intended as such. But as a question Mr. Ludwell replied to them.

"We are fortified, yes; but by no means with the strength we would desire."

"But have you not excellent military provision for the district?"

"Our patrol system is the very best that, under the circumstances, could be desired," Mr. Ludwell replied proudly. "We have, besides, thorough militia organization."

"They will have their hands full this time," commented Mr. Hastings, and referring to the Spaniards. "If they think to make light work of this undertaking, they will find out their bitter mistake. Fortunately," he continued, "we have a Governor who knows how to act, who is not only wise, but also vigorous and alert. When these Spaniards

throw themselves upon us from behind their Indian tools, methinks consternation will be added to their surprise at what they will receive."

"It must be pleasant to be so assured, my friend."

The words were polite enough. The face of the speaker, too, was not unpleasant in its expression as he turned his eyes upon Mr. Hastings. But there was something about the voice—no doubt its failure to ring true to one pair of sensitive ears—that caused the eyes of that person, in turn, to be quickly riveted upon Mr. Fenwicke's countenance.

As Caroline for a brief space gazed intently upon him, as though seeking to penetrate beneath the smile, he turned his head with a swift movement and met the glance full with his own.

She dropped her eyes in confusion, blushing vividly. But he appeared not to notice. Instead he merely addressed to her a pleasant remark. She answered as best she could, but during that meal, at least, looked no more at him.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE CYPRESS BAYOU

AFTER that first dining, during which he had been betrayed into some brusqueness of manner while discussing the Yemassee outlook, Edward Fenwicke made himself exceedingly agreeable to the inmates of Laurel Hill. Even Caroline, after a time, lost the feeling of uneasiness with which she had begun to regard him while noting the intentness with which he had studied the countenances of her uncle and Mr. Hastings. She forgot also her sudden sensation of anger, when he had turned so swiftly to look full into her eyes, with a glance that disturbed her sorely; or, if she remembered it, it was to feel ashamed of her hastiness. His after conduct proved plainly that she had misjudged him. He surely had not intended to be either rude or inquisitive. His manner since that one betrayal had proved all that could be desired. He was a man seemingly of much polish and of refinement. He had traveled extensively. To the young people it appeared that he must have been in every part of

the world. They never tired of listening to his descriptions of the countries he had seen, and his recitals of the experiences that had befallen him in each. Even the older ones were interested.

It was noticed that he talked much to Caroline, sometimes as though she were the only one present. He asked her, too, many questions. After a day or so, when the indefinable feeling of distrust of him had worn away, she told him much of her life in Barbados, especially of Juan Silvo. He had many inquiries to make concerning Juan Silvo.

Mr. Fenwicke was abroad for most of the day, accompanied by his servants. He was making arrangements, he told Mr. Ludwell, to have quite a band of hunters accompany him on his departure for the Indian country. When asked if he did not think it very unwise to proceed at this time on the journey, because of the anticipated uprising of the red men, he smilingly replied that he had no uneasiness whatever. In truth, Mr. Fenwicke appeared to treat the Indian trouble very lightly.

Yet it seemed to be a matter constantly on his mind, and one concerning which he asked many questions. However, the most of these were put to the young people, and in rather a careless way, as though Mr. Fenwicke were seeking more to

“make talk with them,” as the Indians say, than aught else.

His desire to draw Caroline into conversation was evident; it was also noted how frequently he sought her.

One morning he came upon her in the hall just as she had entered it from the passageway, in the floor of which was the door leading to the cellar where the powder was stored. She had been testing her skill in giving the ring just the twist that was needed and in opening the door. She was quite proud of her success, and naturally full of it.

“Where have you been, Mistress Caroline?” asked Mr. Fenwicke pleasantly. “I missed you from the sitting room, and thought perhaps you had gone for a ride on your pony.”

“Nay,” replied Caroline quickly. “I have been trying again the door of the powder cellar. Charles has shown me but twice, and now I can lift it almost as quickly as he! You see, there is a spring by which it moves.”

Caroline had gotten thus far when hastily she checked herself. Had she not been very imprudent in betraying one of their secrets to a stranger?

“The door of the powder cellar!” he exclaimed. Then he, too, paused. Perhaps he saw in her face

much of what she thought. When he continued, his words had a more indifferent sound.

“Why, Mistress Caroline, are you anticipating attack upon some enemy that you must needs go on so warlike an expedition?”

His voice had now a careless ring, but his eyes were watching her closely.

“Nay,” she said quickly, then dropped her glance in some confusion.

Why could she not answer him? she asked herself. Wasn’t she really very foolish? For what harm could there be in his having knowledge of the powder? Wasn’t it generally known throughout the settlement?

“So you have a powder cellar here?” he asked again.

“Yes, sir,” was Caroline’s reply, and now she found her voice; “most of the houses do have one, only my uncle’s is one of the largest. It is necessary, you know, when the times are so troublous to keep large stores of ammunition on hand.”

“And muskets, too?” he asked.

“Oh, yes, sir; each home has its supply. But the powder is the principal thing. The most of that is stored here and at Crow’s Nest. When my uncle and Master Hastings were last at Charles Town they brought back several kegs of it.”

"Then in case of an Indian attack you would at least be well supplied with ammunition?"

He was noting her intently, but now his gaze did not embarrass her, for she had gotten over that foolish fear concerning him.

"That we would, sir."

"Many kegs in the cellar here?"

He asked this very carelessly, and almost as carelessly she replied:

"Oh, yes, sir; quite a number; enough, I've heard my uncle say, to stand a long siege."

"Why, I am surprised to hear this, Mistress Caroline. There were rumors to the effect that the Goose Creek settlers were paying little attention to this matter."

He looked at her in a way that showed that his words implied a question.

"Those rumors, sir, I am thankful to say, are not true."

"Well, there is really no need, after all, that you should be alarmed, Mistress Caroline. There will no harm befall you and yours, take my word for that."

He spoke as one having full assurance of what he said.

"Oh, sir, you mean that you are sure the Indians will not strike this blow? How rejoiced I am to hear you say that!"

He looked at her, a gentle light kindling in his eye, but he did not reply. Instead he asked if she would not go with him to the garden, so that she could tell him again of the plants in which he was so much interested.

Mr. Fenwicke remained six days at Laurel Hill, departing very early on the morning of the seventh.

"You must favor us again, sir, on your return," said Mr. Ludwell hospitably as the guest was departing.

"That will I, friend," was the quick reply. "I shall desire especially to see Laurel Hill and its inmates again. I assure you I can never forget my visit here."

"I am sorry he is gone," said Charles as they watched their guest depart.

"So, too, am I," avowed Philip, "and I hope he will not forget his promise to come back this way."

Caroline felt like echoing the wish, but she said nothing. Apart from the pleasure he had given them through the interesting accounts of his travels, the presence of Mr. Fenwicke had been a welcome relief. It had kept the thoughts of Charles and Philip away from their grievance concerning Caroline. They had been as different boys during those past six days. They had laughed and talked with

their cousin in a free and easy way. They could not well have ignored her had they so desired, since Mr. Fenwicke took such pains to draw her into every conversation.

Caroline feared that Charles and Philip would fall back into the old way after their guest's departure, nor was she mistaken. In a few days she was painfully conscious that again there was that barrier of restraint between her cousins and herself. She resolved to win them yet through love and tact, and set herself bravely to accomplish it. Soon, to her joy, she began to notice a change in Philip, but Charles remained obdurate.

One morning Caroline had been for a long ride with Elizabeth, accompanied by Ephraim. Saying good-bye to Elizabeth at the turning to Crow's Nest, she cantered on to Laurel Hill. As she neared the piazza her aunt appeared thereon. Her nervous manner at once attracted Caroline's attention.

"What is it, Aunt Eleanor?" she asked as she quickly sprang up the steps to her side.

"It is about Charles, Caroline. You know he went away very early this morning to look for the pigs that had strayed in the swamps. He had both Daniel and Jupiter with him."

"And they have not returned, aunt? Is this what is the matter?"

"Daniel and Jupiter are back, Caroline. *They* came nearly two hours ago."

Caroline could feel her aunt's hand trembling in hers.

"Oh, aunt, you can't mean——"

Caroline was unable to proceed.

"That Charles has not returned. Yes, Caroline, that is exactly what I do mean. He went away at eight o'clock and it is now well past one."

"But how is it, aunt, that Jupiter and Daniel have returned?"

"He sent them home with most of the pigs, Caroline. There were only two or three they did not find. He told the negroes he would see to those; that they could not be so very far away. Then he sent Daniel and Jupiter home with the ones they had secured. Oh, Caroline, do you not see that there is something wrong? My poor boy! Suppose that the Indians——"

Mrs. Ludwell was now trembling in so alarming a manner that Caroline had to support her.

"Aunt! aunt! you must not think this!" she cried persuasively. "'Tis only that the pigs have given him a great deal of trouble, or it may be that Charles is, after all, lost in the swamp."

She tried to smile reassuringly in her own confidence.

"Charles could not be lost in the swamp, Caroline. He knows every part of it too well."

"But he may have gone further than he intended, aunt. I have heard that not so far away there are jungles so dense it baffles even the animals to penetrate them. Charles may be caught in one of these. Where are Daniel and Jupiter?" she asked suddenly.

"I sent them back to look for Charles."

"And uncle and Philip and all of the others are still at the blockhouse?"

"Yes, Caroline. You remember the order came from the Governor that work must be pushed as rapidly on the new barricade as possible. Every available man in the vicinity and even the boys are there. Your uncle told me on starting that it would be sunset ere they returned."

"Aunt Eleanor, listen to me," spoke Caroline briskly, "you must try to bear this more calmly. You can do it if you will only believe that it is not the Indians who have Charles. If they were about the patrols would know it. Now I am going myself to settle this matter. Daniel and Jupe are so stupid."

She led her aunt to a seat as she spoke, then gently disengaged her hands.

"Where are you going, Caroline?" Mrs. Lud-

well asked, for she had scarcely noted Caroline's words.

"To find Charles, Aunt Eleanor."

"My child, you must not think of such a thing."

"Yes, dear aunt, I *must*, not only think, but do it. Now I will call Chloe and one other of the maids to remain with you while I am gone."

Her aunt made an effort to stay her, but Caroline was resolute.

"Aunt, dear," she said, "there is that which compels me to go. 'Tis my heart urging me. I cannot disobey it. Aside from my desire to know as quickly as I can what is the trouble with Charles, I cannot bear to see you in such distress. Aunt, do not detain me. I *must* go."

"Caroline, what rash thing is this you propose? I cannot let you go into the swamp, even to find Charles."

Her voice broke in spite of her.

"'Tis no rash thing, aunt, nor is there aught so dreadful about it. I will mount Pollux again and I will ride in close to the swamp, as near as it is safe to go; and I will take the horn and blow loud and long upon it. Remember you not how my uncle has praised my strength of lungs? Oh, Charles will hear me, there is no doubt! If he is hard and fast in the tangle, then he will shout and

I shall hear him; if he is wandering perplexed in the labyrinth, he will know which way to come."

She moved toward the door while yet she spoke, and, not giving her aunt the opportunity to make further effort to stay her, went swiftly away.

She did not find Pollux still saddled and grazing in the yard as she had hoped. A little negro had removed saddle and bridle, and the pony was in the pasture lot.

"Better so!" was Caroline's comment to herself. "I can really manage more satisfactorily without him."

"Tony," she said to the little negro, "run quickly and get me one of the horns in the back hall."

He stared at her a moment, then obeyed.

"Missie," he said as he returned, "you can't sholy be gwine huntin' by yer lone se'f?"

"No, Tony; but you hasten now and find Chloe and Minta and tell them to go to your mistress. She is in the front hall."

For the first part of the way Caroline made fine progress.

The woods nearer the house had been well cleared of brush, and there were only the wide-spreading oaks and the stately pines with their long festoons of gray moss. Through these the fine green threads

of re-awakening life had begun to appear. For spring was here. Butterflies were in the woods, and droning bees and innumerable birds. The dog-woods were in blossom and here and there hung the purple mist of the Judas tree.

From the forest Caroline passed into a maze of young trees, saplings of but a few years' growth, for here the Indians had planted their fields of maize in the time ago. The trees were principally of pine, with a sprinkling now and then of sassafras and persimmon. Tangled vines of the yellow jasmine were running riot in every direction, filling the air with their intoxicating perfume. But Caroline paid no heed. Her thoughts were too closely engaged with the errand upon which she had come.

She was nearing the swamp now, and she began to call loudly for Charles. She hallooed, too, for Daniel. Where could he be? She thought that if she could only find the old negro, they might together formulate some plan for the rescue of Charles. For Caroline still held firmly to her opinion that he was somewhere entangled in the swamp.

She came now to an almost impenetrable coppice of myrtle bushes. There were, too, thorny cactuses, and innumerable tangles of the wild smilax and bamboo vine. They so completely stopped her

progress that she had to retrace her steps several times, and to no small distance. She blew upon her horn now, blast after blast, prolonged and vigorous.

"He will surely hear that," she said.

She stood for many minutes as though intently listening. There was no sound such as she longed to catch. She hallooed again to Charles, then to Daniel. There was not the faintest response.

For the first time Caroline began to realize how foolhardy was the quest upon which she had come. She had acted from impulse, feeling herself drawn to this course through her aunt's sore distress.

It was probable that Charles was in another part of the swamp altogether. He might have gone entirely across it by this time. Even if he had become entangled, he had no doubt succeeded in working his way out. It had taken him a long while, and this, in all probability, was the cause of his delay. He might have been confused and thus lost his bearings. All this would take time. But he would surely find his way out after a while; for, as his mother had said, he knew every part of the swamp.

Why had she not thought of these things at first? Caroline asked herself. Why had she proposed this rash step? But her aunt's distress had been so great that at the moment she had felt she would be

willing to do almost anything to relieve it. Now that she had come, she determined to do her part well, despite the uneasiness that had possession of her.

She blew again upon the horn, and again hallooed loudly. Then she made a circuit of the tangled maze of vines, pausing for the space of several minutes to listen. As before, no voice answered her. She pressed on in her search.

The thicket fell away to a swamp full of cypress and cypress knees. The water looked black and treacherous. She dared not risk the effort to cross from tuft to tuft. She turned to retrace her steps, but now confusion seized her. From which direction had she come? She was not sure, but she thought that this way was right. However, she had not proceeded far when she was equally as sure the course was wrong. She thought no more of the horn now nor of calling to Charles. Her one thought was to find her own way out.

She pushed on as rapidly as she could through the dense growths. There! she thought she heard the sound of rippling water. Could she be near the creek? She knew that a half-mile or so above Laurel Hill the stream made a decided turn.

She moved toward the direction whence the sounds came, but not precipitately. It was as

though the hand of caution was upon her, holding her back.

Suddenly she heard the sound of voices. For one moment they gave her a thrill of hope, for she thought the speakers might be Charles and Daniel. But the next instant the glow died out of her heart, leaving it chilled with apprehension. The voices were not only strange, but they were speaking a foreign language.

She paused, sheltering herself behind a broad cypress trunk. Just before her there was an opening in the cypress trees, and she caught the flash of water. But it was not at this she exclaimed. There floating upon the water was a vessel with rigging and much show of sails, and sitting on its deck three men. They were in earnest conversation, and their faces were near together. But at the moment the exclamation escaped her involuntarily, one of the men raised his head and turned his face in her direction. It was Edward Fenwicke! Astonishment held her spellbound.

CHAPTER XIV

A SPRIG OF LAUREL

CAROLINE'S first impulse was to show herself and to call to Mr. Fenwicke. Surely now her trouble was at an end. For these men would know the way out of the swamp. They would rescue her and conduct her safely back to Laurel Hill. She could not doubt this; for had not Mr. Fenwicke partaken of her uncle's hospitality? Had he not again and again expressed his appreciation, made declaration of his friendship?

But something restrained her, caused her to pause for an instant or so undecided. How strange it was to find Mr. Fenwicke here! He had been gone barely two weeks, and he had assured them, again and again, that it would be a full month ere his return. What was he doing here in the midst of the swamp—for Caroline had now decided this sheet of water could not be the creek proper—and what mission had the vessel? Caroline could see no sign of furs. If the men were on a trading expedition this was a queer place for it.

Against her will, for he had been very pleasant to her, she felt the old feeling of distrust returning. Yet her predicament was great. She must find her way from the swamp. Dared she throw away what might be her only chance of succor because of certain suspicions?

While she thus hesitated words came to her which completely banished all thought of appealing to these men for help. Indeed, so great was the apprehension they gave her that they caused her to seek more effective concealment.

"I thought I heard a sound," Fenwicke had remarked as he raised his head to glance toward the cypress behind which Caroline crouched.

"Some small animal, I suppose," replied one of his companions. "The swamp is full of them."

These words were spoken in English; so, too, were the next sentences that passed between them.

"Well, we must look sharp as to a surprise," replied Fenwicke. "If we are caught off guard, methinks it will be hard to explain to these Carolina colonists that our mission is not other than we profess."

"Besides, if we are searched," added the other, "there'll be the incriminating evidence in the hold of the vessel. Rather ticklish that will be for us, eh, Captain?"

“I should say so. But we’ll not be caught. We’ll slip out to-night and hie away to the rendezvous with the Indians. By the setting of another sun all that is incriminating in our cargo will have disappeared.”

Caroline heard no more, as the men now returned to their former conversation, and in the language they had used at first. This was no doubt done for the benefit of the third man, who could, perhaps, speak no other. To hear it made Caroline’s heart bound. It was the Spanish!

Crouching on hands and knees Caroline crept away through the tangle of myrtle bushes. She dared not stand erect. She had heard that which filled her with the gravest apprehension. Her heart, too, was beating with fear. Where her impulse had been to show herself to these men and crave their succor, there was now only an intensely defined desire to get away from their vicinity as fast as she could with safety. Who were the men, and what was their mission? Over and over again she asked herself the question. Her heart was hot with indignation against him who had called himself Edward Fenwicke. He had partaken of their hospitality; had broken bread with them at the same table; had declared his friendship. What was it that he was about to do that he so feared detec-

tion? Caroline's brain was in a whirl as she tried to understand it. He had some business with the Indians, he had said. Which Indians did he mean? She had heard her uncle say that muskets and ammunition were being brought in boats from Charles Town, so that their Indian allies might be armed to assist the white settlers. It could not be these Indians to whom the men on the deck of the boat had referred, since they spoke of getting away secretly to meet them. There was that, too, which lent added fear to her heart. She had not seen his face plainly, but the belief was strong that the third man on the deck of the little craft was he whom she had first seen in the thicket the day of the grape hunt. It was for his benefit that the Spanish had been spoken.

Caroline put a considerable distance between herself and the men on the sloop ere she dared stand erect again. As she came once more into the forest she raised her head, looking at the sun. It was now well slanted on its downward course. How long had she been in the woods? She had no means of knowing. She turned in the direction which she believed was right, but had not gone far when an exclamation escaped her. Before her was an impenetrable wall of the sword palmettoes. So far as she could see it stretched away on either side of

her. She turned to the left and went along the side of the wall, as solid, as impenetrable as though it were made of masonry.

Perhaps a hundred yards away she came to an immense beech-tree, standing some twenty feet from the wall. Its huge limbs were thrown far out into space, its bark was seamed and pierced by many markings.

Caroline threw her hands outward, bringing them together with joyous gesture. She knew the tree well. She had been here several times, with her uncle, her cousins, and with Elizabeth and Anthony. She knew something else, too, that gave her even more joy. The beech marked the entrance to an old Indian village, but it was a hidden entrance that not many knew. In the days gone by the Creeks had built here a village for defense, hedging it about with walls of the impassable sword palmettoes. They were planted in rows of five to six deep, and when the trees attained their growth, so closely interwoven were their tough spines that even a small animal, such as a rat, penetrated them with difficulty. To the larger animals and man they were impassable.

But there were secret entrances and outlets known at that time only to the builders. Since the departure of the Indians, the secret had come into the

possession of two or three of the old hunters. Mr. Ludwell knew the concealed passages, and he had in turn passed the knowledge of their location on to the young people. A fund of amusement had been provided in consequence, for two or three times since Caroline's coming they had made up a party for the exploration of the old Indian town. They had even tried the experiment of going in alone to see how many of them could find their way out again. Caroline had been one of those put to this test, and her success, after having been shown the way only once, met with unstinted praise.

She knew the way now, knew how to enter the old village through a winding burrow beneath the wall of palmettoes. She knew, too, the outlet on the other side, though that was more intricate. But beyond it lay the open way to Laurel Hill.

The old Indian town was built in a quadrangle, and there was yet another hedge within this hedge, having also its secret entrance. The old town covered a space of about six acres, and it was remarkable that at no point within any one's knowledge had the solid walls of palmetto spines been broken away. The passing years and the corresponding growth of the trees had but rendered them all the more formidable.

Within, the old town was grown up in weeds and

briers, and there were many patches of the prickly cactus, which Caroline had to observe great care in avoiding. Here and there were piles of shells, remnants of great feasts. In the center were the rotting posts of cedar, where the great council hall had once stood; but the huts of reeds and clay had disappeared.

Caroline was more than half across the town when a noise caused her to pause and look about her with keen eyes. It was the sound of footsteps, and they seemed to be heavy footsteps. Her heart gave a bound of fear. Was it some dangerous wild animal? She knew that there were such in the forest, that more than once they had even encroached upon the settlements. This fear had been with her ever since she had realized that she was lost in the woods—the fear of meeting some wild animal that would do her harm. Was this fear to be realized now?

She waited, her heart beating loudly, and she felt herself growing cold with apprehension.

She had paused in the midst of what had once been an avenue of magnolias leading to the Indian council hall. Some of the trees yet remained, and it was from the other side of one of these that the noise had come to her. Its untrimmed branches, wide-spreading and thickly foliaged, grew almost to

the ground. It was impossible to see beyond them.

The noise was repeated. The footsteps were coming nearer, and now her fear, well-defined before, was intensified. For to the sound of footsteps was added that of voices. She could only hear the murmur of them, as yet not even the tones were distinct. Whoever the speakers were, they were preserving caution. Could it be the men she had seen on the schooner? Had they, after all, detected her, and were they following her? If this were true, then they also, knew the secret of the Indian village. Should she spring forward, trusting to her speed and her knowledge of the outlet to carry her beyond their reach? or should she crouch where she was, concealing herself beneath the limbs of the magnolia until they had passed on? Even as she hesitated, weighing the chances of safety, the one against the other, two men came suddenly into the opening from around the magnolias. She realized that if they were enemies she was indeed lost.

"Mistress Caroline! Why, Mistress Caroline!" ejaculated a voice that caused her a thrill of joy. "Do mine eyes really show me aright?"

She answered the question, and so great was the revulsion of feeling from fear to joy, she could scarce render the words audible.

"Yes, Captain Harrison, it is I. But as surprised as you are to see me, it is no more than I am to see you. Oh!" she cried suddenly as she pressed her hand against her side, "I have been *so* frightened. I heard your footsteps and those of your servant, and I thought it was some one who would harm me."

He looked at her inquiringly.

"This is a strange place for you, young mistress. Have you been caught in the trap as well as myself? But that is an idle question since I see you here."

"What trap, Captain Harrison?"

His glance changed now to one of astonishment.

"Why, this trap of palmetto walls, to be sure! I have never seen anything in all my life to equal it, nor ever dreamed of it either."

"How did you enter?" she asked quickly.

"I know not. I only realized that I was entrapped when I found these walls of impenetrable spines shutting me off whichever way I turned."

"Oh, then there must be an opening somewhere that none of them know, I mean my uncle and the others. An animal has no doubt succeeded in breaking through, or perhaps one or more of the palmettoes are uprooted."

"Of course there is an opening," he said, looking at her as though he thought she was speaking very stupidly; "else how could I and my servant have entered? I remember going down on my knees," he continued, "and wriggling as a serpent might. It was against my judgment, but I could see no other course at that moment if we were to proceed in the direction desired."

"I beg your pardon, Captain Harrison; if there is such an opening the old hunter who told my uncle does not know of it. The passages are both secret ones."

"You speak as though you were familiar with the place, Mistress Caroline. Are you really not, after all, like myself lost therein?"

The gladness in his voice was impossible to mistake. His eyes were radiant as he bent them upon her.

"My child," he continued, "if it really be true that you can pilot me from this place there is naught within reasonable bounds that you may ask of me that I will not grant. For three of the most wretched hours of my life have I been trying to make my way out, realizing that at every turn I was caught like the bear in the trap, hard and fast. See how I have literally fought with the sharp spines! We have hacked away with knife and

hatchet, but naught have we accomplished save damage to skin and clothing."

She noticed now that his hands were lacerated and bleeding, as also were those of his black servant. Rents, too, were in their clothing. The beautifully beaded buckskin fringe of his hunting shirt and leggings was sadly frayed. In several places it was quite torn away.

"What renders the situation all the more torturing," he continued, "is that I am bound on a most important mission and every moment is precious."

"Then despair no more," she added reassuringly. "I know the way out. See you not that great tulip tree yonder? Beneath its root is the outlet we seek. I was hastening there when you appeared."

Noting the inquiry of his look, she continued:

"I, too, was lost, but not here. As soon as I came to the great beech beside the palmetto walls then I knew where I was. I was hunting my cousin, who we fear is entangled in the swamp. I brought the horn that I might sound it and thus give him his bearings. I, too, became lost, but now I am so no longer, for I know well the way when once we are without."

As they walked toward the tulip tree she told him the history of the old Indian town. It had once

been the seat of government of a great chief of the Creeks.

“Lucky for me, Mistress Caroline, that you too were lost and that you found your way here!” exclaimed Captain Harrison as they neared the tree. He paused, then added with deep feeling: “Child, what would I have done had I not come upon you here? Beyond doubt I should have spent many hours more in the exhausting effort at release, and it would have been by the slimmest chance that I found again the opening by which we entered. But this would have been but the smallest part, since my detention herein until nightfall would mean the complete annihilation of all that I have planned. And such a result, Mistress Caroline, might have led to calamity.”

His face was very grave as he said these words, and they made Caroline feel grave, too. He was going on some important commission connected with the Indian trouble, she felt assured. How rejoiced she was that she had been able to help him.

Outside the great wall of palmettoes he took Caroline’s hands for a moment within his own, his face even graver than before.

“Mistress Caroline, it is a great service you have rendered to the—to me this day, and never shall I forget it. What token may I give you that you may

keep always as a reminder of my gratitude? One in the garb of a woodsman, such as I now wear, has naught with him to be used as offering that would attract a maiden's eye. But some day this may not be so. Until then let me give you, as a memento of this day, this sprig of laurel. See, I tie it with a bit of the fringe yet left to me."

He gazed at her steadily for a moment. There was an incomprehensible look in his eyes, his voice weighted with some feeling to her strange, inexplicable.

"If ever the time comes when you need a friend, who can do you a great service, and it is discovered to you that such an one I can be, then hesitate not to make your desire known. This laurel token sent from you to me will bring from me in response whatever within a reasonable limit lies in my power to grant."

She looked at him, trembling with some new excitement. Then she raised her voice:

"Captain Harrison," she said, "I must ask you a question."

CHAPTER XV

CONQUERED

THE weight of earnestness in Caroline's tones caused Captain Harrison to look at her quickly.

"What is it, my child, that so weighs upon you?" he asked. "What is that you would have me answer?"

"It is this, sir. Does the mission of which you speak have to do with the Indian trouble? Has aught occurred to cause serious apprehension? Oh, sir, do you know that which makes you think this terrible calamity will really fall upon us?"

"I know nothing definite," he said after a moment's pause. "But the sky is darkening, my child, and there is no telling when the storm may burst."

"But so many times the alarm has come and there was naught of reality in it. Oh, if it might be that our fears of these Indians are groundless! How sweet, how restful everything is here! How these people of Goose Creek love their homes! how much they have done to beautify them! Oh, such

a smiling land as it is! To think what a fearful fate may be in store for it!"

She shuddered as she spoke, and lifted her hand as though she would veil her eyes from the picture.

"Well, let us hope with all our hearts that even yet it may be averted," he replied, his voice tremulous with feeling. "That the faith and courage of its people may save this land from the threatened woe. Let us pray God that I—that Gilbert Harrison and those who stand with him may yet have it in their power to thwart the machinations of the real enemy—the Spaniards at St. Augustine—that fair Carolina may yet be brought safely out of the peril; yea, above all, that the precious lives of her people may not be sacrificed."

His eyes were misty with feeling as he concluded, and for the moment his face was lifted to the blue of the sky as though invoking thence the aid he craved.

The mention of the word "Spaniards" caused a wave of remembrance to sweep over Caroline. A sharp cry escaped her.

"Oh, sir, how remiss I have been! I ought long ago to have told you of that upon which mine eyes looked scarce the hour ago. But the meeting with you in the Indian village was so much a surprise, it quite drove other thoughts out of my mind. Yet, sir, before I met you I was so full of that which

I had seen, so alarmed by it, too, I scarce thought of aught else."

"Why, what was it you saw, Mistress Caroline, that so disturbed you?"

He was bending nearer to regard her with earnest scrutiny. He could see how greatly agitated she had become.

"Oh, Captain Harrison, I do believe that I have seen again one of the two Spaniards from whom I had such a fright the day of the grape hunt."

He gave a quick start.

"Are you sure, young mistress?"

"Yes, sir, that I am. I was somewhat uncertain at first, but the more I have thought of it, the more fully convinced have I become that I am right."

"You tell me that you have really seen one of these men again? When and where, Mistress Caroline?"

His interest was intense now. His eyes had a strange glow. His manner was such it seemed he could scarce wait for her reply.

"In a cypress swamp not so very far from here, and not more than an hour ago, as I have stated, sir."

"In a cypress swamp!" he ejaculated, "and not far from here. Let me hear quickly, Mistress Caroline, all that you have to tell."

Every nerve was alert with excitement. He could scarce wait for the recital. He seemed more than once about to break away from her in the very midst of it.

“I was hunting my cousin,” continued Caroline. “I became lost, and was on the point of giving up in despair, when I heard voices. I looked about me quickly, and there straight ahead through an opening in the cypress trees I saw a sheet of water, and on it at anchor a sloop, and sitting on the deck of the sloop——”

“A sloop!” he cried sharply, and grasped her arm in his excitement, but not roughly. “Oh, young mistress, this is indeed mighty news you are giving me! I can scarce believe mine ears hear aright. It was to locate these very men I started out this morning. This was the mission of which I spoke to you in the Indian village. Now you tell me that your own eyes have seen the men and the craft.”

“Yea, Captain Harrison, and scarce an hour ago. I was hastening home to give the information when I met you. I can’t imagine why I should have delayed thus long to inform you. There is that about this matter, sir,” she continued, “which troubles me no little.”

As rapidly as she could with clearness, for she

could plainly see his impatience to be off, she told him of the visit of Fenwicke to Laurel Hill, and how that she had now seen him only this morning aboard the sloop.

“Describe this man Fenwicke to me, Mistress Caroline.”

He was pressed for time, but there was yet information he desired.

“As I supposed!” he exclaimed when she had concluded. “Mistress Caroline, this man’s name is not Fenwicke at all, but he is Captain Dalton, the most unprincipled of all the Spanish agents. The worst of it is that he can be the gentleman when he desires, for I have been told he was well reared, more’s the pity!”

“Oh, Captain Harrison, can this be true?”

“It is, Mistress Caroline. I am sure of it after your description.

“But I must hasten. There is not another moment to lose, especially as you have told me that the intention of these men is to be off at dark. Can you direct me, young mistress, so that I can find the spot?”

“I think so, Captain Harrison, but I am not sure. I became so tangled up in the forest myself.”

“Give me the bearings then so well as you can, Mistress Caroline. I think that I shall locate two

or three of my friendly Indians near at hand. They will, no doubt, be able to supply what you fail to give. Besides, they will be very likely to know of any arm of the creek hereabouts."

"But, Captain Harrison, you surely do not mean that you are going to attempt the capture of these men and with so little aid?"

There was a ring of entreaty in her voice.

"Nay, Mistress Caroline, what I desire now is to locate them. Afterwards——" He paused here, asking a question of her instead.

"There is no aid available from Laurel Hill, is there, Mistress Caroline?"

"Nay, sir, there is not. My uncle and every one of the men, black and white, are at the blockhouse."

"Then I'll go quickly, locate my game, and call on the men at the blockhouse for the help needed. Methinks it will not take long to snare the game once the net is spread."

He was moving away, but wheeled suddenly to exclaim:

"Why, my head has certainly been turned by what you have told me! Here I am about to go away and leave you unprotected in the forest."

"Think not of me, sir," Caroline quickly replied. "My uncle's house is but a short distance,

and I know the way well. I would not have you delay another moment."

"Then farewell, Mistress Caroline. All Carolina owes you a debt this day for the services you have rendered and—and Gilbert Harrison for one will never forget it."

He gave her a bow of such finished courtesy that wonder filled her as she looked at him. Where had he learned such grace of manner? Surely not in the woods among traders and Indians.

Much of the forest was now in shadow, as the sun was well on its downward course. Caroline walked on swiftly. She was wondering again what had become of Charles. He was surely safe at home by this time.

The woods were full of sounds. Birds were fluttering from tree to tree. She could hear a squirrel munching his nuts, and a woodpecker beating his tattoo upon the hard fiber of an oak, while two blue jays not far away were screaming noisily. She could even hear the bark of a wolf, and her face grew whiter at the sound.

Suddenly there was borne to her a noise not like any of the others. She paused, waiting for it to be repeated. It came again, and more clearly defined. Some one was calling; some one was in distress. There was that about the voice which caused Caro-

line to move swiftly in the direction whence it came. Its tones were familiar. Could it be? She asked herself the question with a beating heart.

The voice guided her now; he who called saw her.

Spent with running and almost breathless, she arrived at the foot of a sweet-gum tree, where, upon the moss that spread about it like a soft, green carpet, was crouched the form she had expected to see from the moment she had begun her flight toward it.

“Charles! Charles!” she cried. “Is it really you? What has happened? Why are you huddled there in that manner? Oh, my dear, are you hurt in any way?”

He lifted a face to her drawn with pain, and in it she had her answer even before his words came.

“I fell into a hole, Caroline. It must have been the burrow of some wild beast it was so deep. But the leaves covered it so I could not see it. I have hurt my leg terribly. At first I thought it only wrenched, but now I fear me it is worse than that.”

A spasm of deeper pain passed over his face, and, despite his effort at repression, a groan escaped him. For in turning so that he might see her he had unwittingly given the leg a wrench.

She knelt beside him, laying her hand gently upon

the injured limb. Her fingers trembled somewhat, but her voice was steady as she asked him:

"When did this happen, Charles? and where? How long have you suffered so?"

"It was several hours ago, Caroline; not long after I sent Daniel and Jupe home with the pigs. Did they reach there all right?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes, Charles, and aunt was greatly worried that you did not come, too. When time passed, and you still did not appear, she feared something dreadful had happened to you. I was out with Elizabeth all the morning. When I reached ho—the house, I found aunt in such a disturbed state I felt I must do all I could to relieve her anxiety. So I started to the swamp that I might blow the horn, hoping you would hear it, and if you were really tangled up somewhere, you could, by its sound, find your way out."

"You came in search of me?" he asked wonderingly.

"Yes, Charles. Why, what was there in that? I told aunt I would ride Pollux to the edge of the swamp; that I would not go very far."

"But where is the pony?"

She hesitated, and would no doubt have ignored the question had he not repeated it.

"What have you done with Pollux, Caroline?"

"I did not ride him. He was unsaddled when I came again to the yard, and I wanted not the delay of waiting for Tony. His movements usually, as you know, are like those of the rice huller, as Daniel describes it, 'mekin' 'e own slow time, missie.'"

She imitated the old black to perfection in tone and pronunciation. If her object was to make Charles smile, she succeeded.

But the smile soon died, for he looked at her with swift inquiry.

"Caroline, you surely have not been all this time in the woods looking for me? Why, it is but an hour or so of sundown, and if you started soon after Daniel and Jupe returned, it must have been about noon."

"It was not long after one of the clock," admitted Caroline. "The truth is I have loitered sadly, and I have had some adventures, about which I will tell you, but not now."

She paused, looking at him solicitously.

"You have not told me yet where it was you hurt your leg."

"It was over on the other side of the swamp, Caroline; I should say nearly two miles from here."

Over her face there swept a great wave of pity. Her eyes grew dewy, her lips tremulous.

"Oh, Charles, you surely have not come all this distance with your hurt limb?"

"Yes, Caroline. It was dreadful, to be sure, and two or three times I felt I must give up. It has taken me hours. For the last half-mile I have crawled on hands and knees."

A cry escaped her.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" she said, and ere she knew it she had her arms about him and was smoothing his hair with pitying touches. When she realized what she was doing, she drew away from him with a confused air.

But Charles was in no mood to show her disapproval. In truth, her sudden movement away from him rather hurt him than otherwise. Why he could not at that moment tell. He was not a boy to pose for sympathy, much less had he a right to expect any evidence of this sentiment from Caroline. His conduct toward her had been such as to invite any other demonstration than this she had shown him. There was that in her manner, the sudden warmth with which she had caressed him, that thrilled him strangely. He felt disappointed now that she had drawn away from him in this stiff manner.

But the warmth came back again to eyes and voice as she said to him:

"I must get you speedily to the house. You cannot lie here longer suffering so. Already you have endured what not many could bear and come through as you have. But your strength is ebbing, and soon the pain will be beyond even your control, poor boy!"

Again he felt his heart thrill. He had not believed that any words of sympathy could sound so sweet.

"How will you manage it, Caroline?"

He had dropped the somewhat stiff prefix to her name. He had called her "Caroline" all through this interview, ever since she had first bent over him and he had seen a look in her eyes that had never been there before for him.

"I will assist you," she replied firmly.

"You cannot do that. I am almost a dead weight now. I can do little to help myself. Oh, my dear, your will is good, but this is beyond your strength!"

It was Caroline's heart that thrilled now. He had called her "dear." Only once before had such a word passed his lips for her, and that was on the day when he had seen her rushing toward the infuriated bull, straight to her doom, as he believed.

"Try to regain your feet, Charles," she pleaded.

"It will be terrible pain, I know, but you have the courage to endure. Let me get my hands beneath your arms. So! Now bear your weight upon your uninjured leg and help me all you can. There! Oh, poor Charles! I can see how it hurts you!"

Tears of sympathy were in her eyes. They were dropping upon her cheeks.

"Caroline! Caroline!" he ejaculated in astonishment. "Do you weep because of my pain?"

"Yes, Charles. Oh, I cannot bear to see you suffer so!"

With sudden impulsive gesture he threw his arm about her neck, and then, ere she had the least intimation of what he was about to do, or time was given her to realize the happiness that had come on such swift wing, he dropped his head against her breast, saying brokenly between his own sobs:

"My dear, my dear, I do not deserve this, when I have been so hateful to you!"

"Say not so, Charles."

For the moment she could find no further word, for she was trembling so with the joy of all that his manner and his words indicated as scarce to be capable of speech.

"Say not so, Charles," she repeated. "It has all been a misunderstanding. We must begin anew."

“That I will, Caroline, and with all my heart. When I think how I have treated you——”

“You must not think of that now, Charles. Your one thought must be to help me get you to the house. There! you are trying to do too much for yourself. You will ruin your injured leg in this way. You must lean harder on me.”

He made brave effort to follow her directions, but they had proceeded only a little way when he suddenly fell against her, collapsed as it were, and for the moment the fear was great upon her that he had fainted. But the next instant his voice came, entreating her:

“Leave me, Caroline. This is too exhausting upon you. In a little while you will have no strength left. You are literally having to carry me now. Oh, my dear, there is naught but to let me stay here while you go for help!”

He drew away from her as he spoke, and sank in a heap upon the ground.

“I cannot, Charles,” said Caroline. “I cannot leave you here and night approaching. See! the sun will soon be down! The dark night might be upon you ere succor came. Think of the wolves and other wild animals. My dear, my dear, I cannot go!” she finished brokenly. “*I cannot!*”

“Crying again, Caroline? Oh, how unworthy

am I of such tears! What a heart you have, Caroline! And I did not know! I did not know!"

A moan escaped him, but it was not all of physical anguish.

"Hist! some one comes!" exclaimed Caroline. "Heaven grant that it is Daniel."

But it was not Daniel; yet her heart gave a great leap of joy, for there, but a few steps away, were Captain Harrison and his black servant, Hector.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ARMY OF THREE AND GIDEON

"How rejoiced I am, Mistress Caroline," exclaimed Captain Harrison, "to have overtaken you. I feared I should not. You have found your cousin, I see, but what is wrong?"

"Charles stepped into a hole, Captain Harrison, and wrenched his leg so that he has been unable to walk. He is afraid it is broken, but I think 'tis not so bad as that, sir, though he is suffering intense pain."

"You tried to help him, but found your strength insufficient?" he added solicitously. "Ah, I see!" Then noting that she regarded him wonderingly, he continued: "You are no doubt greatly surprised to behold me again so quickly, Mistress Caroline. I had not proceeded far when I became convinced that I could not manage this affair without further help from you. But more of this anon."

He now addressed himself to Charles.

"I trust your hurt is not of so serious a nature as you fear, young sir."

He took the limb gently in his hand, and even more gently began to examine it.

"Charles," said Caroline, "this is Captain Harrison of whom you have heard so much. I had not long parted from him when I found you. He——"

But Charles did not wait to hear further. His face beamed with pleasure despite his pain.

He grasped the hand of the famous woodsman, exclaiming:

"Oh, sir, it makes me almost forget my pain to see you! I have long wanted to see you; and to think that I now have the opportunity!"

"Your words are very flattering, Master Charles," said Captain Harrison, smiling good-naturedly. "They make me feel that you have not heard all ill of me."

"That I have not, sir, you may rest assured," replied Charles, returning the smile. "In all Carolina there is not a man more trusted and beloved than Captain Harrison, unless 'tis the Governor himself."

But here a moan from Charles checked further words, for again had come the spasm of pain through and through his foot. He had said enough, however, to cause a deep glow of pleasure to kindle in the eyes of the man who now bent over the wounded limb with the tenderness of a woman.

He looked at Charles suddenly.

“Have you courage enough, Master Charles, to bear a very sudden and sharp pain? If so, there’s that to be done which will speedily repair the injury.”

“You mean, sir?”

Charles could not finish. He had sudden fear as to the meaning.

“One of the bones of your foot has slipped from its socket. If you think you have strength enough to bear it, I will return it. ’Twill take but a moment or so. Far better it is if done now than to delay.”

Charles shut his teeth hard together.

“Then do it now, sir, if you will be so good,” he said resolutely.

With a little cry Caroline sank on her knees beside Charles, and threw her arm about him. Her lips quivered as she addressed Captain Harrison:

“Oh, sir, ’twill not be so very dreadful, will it?”

“Nay, have no fear. Our young soldier here will stand it all right. ’Tis of heroic stuff Carolina youths are made, know you not, young mistress?”

He smiled reassuringly at Charles, who, after these words, would have endured even worse pain unflinchingly.

It was quickly over, as Captain Harrison had as-

sured them it would be. Charles, white and faint, leaned against Caroline, but he still smiled bravely.

"You will find great improvement now, Master Charles," said his surgeon reassuringly. "Your limb will still be swollen and will give you trouble, but there will be nothing like the terrible pain you have so far endured."

"It already feels better, thanks to you, sir," replied Charles.

Captain Harrison arose quickly. He looked at Caroline in a troubled way.

"My object in returning, Mistress Caroline," he said, "was to see if I could not get, through your effort, a speedy message to O-co-nos-tee, the Indian hunter. I heard that he would be at Laurel Hill this afternoon."

"He was to have been, sir," replied Charles in response to Caroline's look of inquiry, "but my father sent word to him early this morning to join the men at the fort instead."

"Then I fear all hope from his direction must be abandoned," exclaimed Captain Harrison despondently.

"What, sir, is it that troubles you?" asked Charles quickly, for he noted the cloud on his face.

"Oh, Charles, there has something very exciting

happened," cried Caroline, ere Captain Harrison could respond. "What do you think I saw while I was hunting for you?"

Rapidly she gave him an account of her thrilling adventure, adding to it the information bestowed by Captain Harrison.

For the moment Charles' pain was entirely forgotten in his astonishment.

"Why, Caroline," he cried, his eyes beaming with pride, "what a brave girl you are! To think of your coming upon these men, and standing there to hear what they had to say, without so much as an exclamation to betray you! Then to creep away again on hands and knees! Was it not superb, Captain?"

"That it was, Charles. Not many girls could have done it."

"Say only *one*, sir, and that she is before us."

"Oh, Charles, don't be so foolish," entreated Caroline. "You know very well there are others who could have done it. But isn't it dreadful about Master Fenwicke?"

"It is indeed. I could never have believed it but for this testimony."

"He made himself so very agreeable when he was at Laurel Hill," said Caroline, turning to Captain Harrison.

"When was he there? I have forgotten to ask you that."

"About two weeks ago."

"Well, he surely was very bold. A price was on his head then. He is the leader. It is a wonder your uncle did not suspect him. He must have heard of the misdemeanors of which he is guilty. But I forgot," he added hastily, "that this name Fenwicke is a new one."

"I did not like him at first," declared Caroline. "I thought he watched my uncle and Master Hastings too closely, and he showed disapproval when they spoke against the Spaniards. But after a while he seemed to get over this. He made himself so pleasant. Oh, how I wish I had never had anything to do with him! And," she added after a moment, and with more of the bitterness of self-reproach, "I told him about the powder. I do hope it wasn't wrong!"

"What did you tell him about the powder, Caroline?" asked Charles quickly. "Was he asking you questions about the powder?"

"Yes, Charles, he did. He wanted to know where it was stored, if we had much of it, and other like questions. I told him where it was, but oh, Charles, how rejoiced I am that I did not tell him how to turn the ring! Yet it was the very same day

that he alluded to it again. He even said he would like to see how I opened the door, but I managed to treat his request as though he were only joking."

"He was after no good, I am sure," declared Charles. "But as the powder is still all right, Caroline, you need not reproach yourself in any way."

"I fear he will yet make use of his knowledge if he is not captured," asserted Captain Harrison. "And this reminds me, Mistress Caroline, that I must hasten on the quest from which I turned me aside a half-hour ago, hoping you might be able to send O-co-nos-tee speedily to my aid. The game intends to slip out by nightfall, you have told me. This must not be. If I thwart him, I must go speedily," and he glanced uneasily at the sun.

"Captain Harrison," cried Charles suddenly, "what is it you are going to do?"

"Find the spot where the game lies in covert, Charles; then summon aid to help me in the capture."

"But, sir, is this possible? See how low the sun is! In a half-hour or so it will be down. Can you reach the spot in time? Will you know just where to look?"

"That is what is troubling me, Charles. Your cousin gave me the directions, but I think she is herself somewhat confused, having been lost in the

forest. I had not proceeded far after leaving her ere I became convinced that unless I could find one of my Indian guides, who ought to be hereabouts, I might not make a success of discovering the bayou where the sloop lies."

Charles looked quickly at Caroline.

"Describe to me, cousin, as well as you can, the spot where the sloop lay at anchor."

In a few words she did so, and her excitement not being so great now, as when she had stated the experience to Captain Harrison, her description was sufficiently clear to give full enlightenment to Charles.

"'Tis the place known as the Buzzard's Cove!" he cried with brightening face. "Why, sir, 'tis not more than three-quarters of a mile from here, in that direction," pointing to the left, "and I know the way well. Oh, if I did not have this injured limb, how quickly could I take you there."

He groaned now, not with pain, but with vexation.

Suddenly his face grew radiant. He drew himself up by Caroline's aid, standing upon his uninjured limb.

"Oh, sir, now I have it!" he cried, clapping his hands as he glanced at Captain Harrison. "I *will* guide you there. Your black servant shall lend me

his legs. They appear to be first-rate ones," and he glanced approvingly at the fine, sinewy figure of the young black man. "Yes, Hector shall carry me. My limb feels ever so much better, thanks to you, sir."

Hector returned the smile. The compliment to his fine, strong limbs pleased him greatly.

"Your servant, young massa," he said, grinning until his beautiful white teeth, as perfect as ever teeth could be, shone in gleaming array between his parted lips. "Hector can carry you, sir, and another one like you."

"Then let us be off!" cried Charles, his excitement deepening. "Come, Caroline, take up the musket again, dear, and the powder flask. Methinks you'll make a brave soldier. 'Tis a royally good weapon. I've seen you shoot one before not nearly as good, and go true to the mark."

"Charles," exclaimed Caroline, her voice trembling, "do you mean what you say? Are you really of the mind to go on this quest with Captain Harrison? Think of the danger, dear. These men may see us this time. Besides, Charles," her voice breaking more at the thought, "remember you not how that every moment we are away increases your mother's anguish? Oh, how dreadfully she must feel by this time!"

At these words Captain Harrison, too, joined his entreaties to Caroline's.

"Yes, Master Charles, you must think first of all of your mother. Her grief is no doubt intense by this time. Under these circumstances I could not permit you to guide me on this quest, as much as may depend on it, and as earnestly as I desire it."

At this moment steps were heard not far away.

"Daniel!" cried Caroline joyously, "and Jupe!"

Yes, it was the faithful black and his young attendant.

Daniel shouted aloud when he saw Charles, for, after a long and wearisome search, he was returning home with a heavy heart to report his failure.

Quickly matters were explained to Daniel.

"Go home now, Jupe," said Charles in conclusion, "and tell the mistress that all is well, and that we are going on a search, and will be there not long after dark. Daniel, you must stay, so that you can bear me home when the mission is accomplished."

But Jupe was not to be sent away alone, with the sunset and twilight creeping on. He howled aloud at the prospect. He was "afeard o' the Injuns!" he declared. It was finally agreed that Daniel should accompany him to within a short distance of Laurel Hill. Then he was to return on his course as

speedily as he could to Buzzard's Cove, the location of which Daniel knew very well.

Charles found Hector the able steed he had declared. The black was, too, very gentle with him, carefully supporting Charles' wounded leg as he bore him on his back.

They were soon off toward the Cove, Caroline bearing Charles' musket, and Captain Harrison carrying his own and Hector's.

Once Charles had proposed to Caroline that she return with Daniel and Jupe. The old black, too, had urged this step. But she turned a deaf ear to the proposition. She would not leave Charles, she declared. His wounded limb might grow worse again, and he would need her. Besides, they were not going into any real danger. They would point out the place of the sloop to Captain Harrison without approaching too near; then they would silently slip away again.

But as they went along a mighty scheme began to evolve itself in Charles' brain. Suddenly he exclaimed to Captain Harrison:

"I see no reason, sir, why we should not frighten those men away from the sloop and take possession of it. Look what a fine army we are! An army of three, sir, and here is a wounded Gideon to boot."

As he spoke he pointed smilingly to the hunting

horn Caroline had borne, and which he had now hung across his own shoulders.

"What with the three of you popping away as fast as you can with the muskets, and the self-instituted Gideon blowing away on the horn, those men are bound to think a whole company of Carolina rangers are closing in upon them. They'll either surrender or take to their heels."

A sudden light gleamed in Captain Harrison's eyes.

"That isn't a bad proposition," he declared. Then he turned quickly to Caroline:

"How many men, Mistress Caroline, did you tell me you had seen aboard the sloop?"

"Three, sir. This Master Fenwicke, or Dalton, or whatever his name is, and two others."

"And you think there were no more?"

"There might have been one other, sir. Indeed, they spoke as though there were four of them altogether."

Captain Harrison's eyes flashed. He drew his lips quickly together as if forming a sudden resolution.

"If there are no more than that," he declared, "I do believe we could handle them. But there, Mistress Caroline, I forgot that you are a girl. Nay," he added resolutely, "I must not think of that which

has been proposed. But I must confess, Master Charles, that for a moment or so your words put a very alluring temptation in my way, one that is hard to resist."

"Captain Harrison," cried Caroline with sudden decision, "pray, sir, do not hesitate on my account, because that I am a girl and you feel I cannot be of the help desired. I assure you that I am not afraid, and that I can fire the musket very close to the mark. Of course, sir," she continued, and with a shudder, "I would not wish to hit any one, that is, to hurt him very much. But if you really think, sir, there is a chance to frighten the men away and to gain possession of the sloop, then do not let us hesitate. I assure you I am ready. I can do more than you think."

She had drawn herself up to her full height. Her eyes were flashing, her cheeks stained with rich color. Courage was in every line of the resolute young figure.

Despite the caution he should have observed, Charles clapped his hands vigorously.

"Did I not tell you, sir, she would make a good soldier?"

"That she will, Charles. I have no fear," replied Captain Harrison quickly. Then he added resolutely: "But we must not think of doing what

was proposed. There may be greater danger than we surmise. These men, no doubt, are daring, even reckless. Instead of taking to their heels, as we hope, they may make great danger for us."

"I firmly believe we can frighten them," persisted Charles. "Oh, I tell you, sir, this army of three and Gideon will prove invincible, as much so as did the real Gideon band in Bible times. 'Tis true this Gideon is wounded, but you'll be surprised, sir, at the way I'll make this old horn talk!"

The Captain smiled back at him, his own face reflecting the buoyancy of Charles'. Truth to tell, the thought of what might be done by the army of three and Gideon was still clinging to him with alluring persistency. Victories had been won at greater odds. Why not this one?

But over and over he kept saying to himself, "I must not think of this thing, for I dare not—yea, I *will not* put in jeopardy these young lives."

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRIUMPHANT VOYAGE OF "THE CAROLINE"

THEY proceeded for some moments in silence, owing to the intimation given by Charles that they were very near the edge of the bayou.

The sun was now almost at its setting and but a few faint quivering rays penetrated the woodland. Already the little band had entered the growth of cypress, where the light was still dimmer, owing to the long, thick streamers of gray moss that in some places swung almost to the ground.

Charles spoke in low tones to Hector :

"Put me down here, you good fellow. You've been just as gentle as could be; not an unnecessary twinge have you caused me. I must shake your hand for it. A thousand thanks to you, and blessings, too."

He wrung the hand of the faithful black in a manner that caused Hector to show his teeth again in a smile of appreciation.

Hector was about to wrench away some of the long, thick streamers of moss, so as to make more

comfortable the seat Charles occupied against the broad trunk of one of the trees, but the youth deterred him.

"Make no more noise than can be avoided. We are very near the spot now."

Then he added to Captain Harrison, who had drawn close beside him:

"Do you see that cypress, sir, not more than twenty paces away, the one with the broken limb that is swinging loosely with the moss? From what my cousin tells me, I'm sure that's the tree whence she looked out upon the sloop. There are two charred stumps near by."

All this was said in a whisper, and in the same undertone Captain Harrison replied to the questions.

"You recognize the place now, do you not, Caroline?" Charles asked her. "This is the very tulip tree with the small cedar growing out the crevice in its trunk, behind which, as you have told me, you drew yourself erect again after creeping away from the bayou. It is all familiar now, isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied confidently, "it is."

"Then show Captain Harrison just where the sloop is, for no doubt 'tis still there."

"And will Hector remain with you?" asked Caroline anxiously.

"Nay, Hector must go too, for he may be needed."

"But we must not all desert you so," she replied resolutely. "Let me stay with you, Charles."

"Yea," spoke Captain Harrison quickly, "dissuade her not, Charles. Let her remain as she desires. Apart from her wish to be with you in case aught should happen, 'tis far the safer place here."

"'Tis not necessary for her to remain, sir," declared Charles. "'Tis only her solicitude for me that prompts her," and his eyes glowed as they glanced toward Caroline. "I doubt, sir, if you can get along without her, as she knows just the spot whence she saw the sloop."

"That I do," agreed Caroline quickly. "I think I can find the place now without trouble."

"Then take the gun again, Caroline, and go with Captain Harrison and Hector, like the brave soldier I know you'll prove to be. If it seems to you, sir," he added to Captain Harrison as he was turning away, "that we can frighten these men and take the sloop, don't hesitate to make the attack. I'll do my part the moment I hear the first gun discharged."

Captain Harrison was an accomplished woodsman. From having been much with his master, the

black, too, knew well the Indian trick of moving stealthily and noiselessly. He knew also how to use ears as well as eyes. Heeding well the hints given her by Captain Harrison, Caroline, too, moved forward in a manner that gave her instructor great satisfaction.

Suddenly Caroline turned and whispered to him :

“ This is the tree, sir. If you will raise yourself and peer from the right-hand side of it I think that you will see the sloop. I know that you will if 'tis still there.”

Even while she was whispering these words to him there came the sound of voices straight across the opening wherein the sheet of water gleamed.

Captain Harrison's eyes flashed suddenly as they encountered Caroline's.

“ I think there is no longer question of that, Mistress Caroline.”

He drew himself upward cautiously, and, keeping his body well behind the tree, brought his eyes to a position whence they could see well whatever rested upon the vista of water.

There, still riding at anchor, was the sloop, though he could not at first see the men who were talking.

The sun had gone down in a clear sky. There were not even wisps of clouds to obscure the after-

glow. The reflection yet lingered upon the water and in it objects were quite distinct. Thus Captain Harrison saw the sloop in all its perfection of beauty and grace.

“’Tis a fine craft,” he whispered to Caroline. “How I would like to possess it for——”

The remainder of the words were lost, for now there had occurred a movement on board the sloop that had caused him to turn his head again quickly in that direction.

The two men had been kneeling on the deck busy with some part of the rigging and with the sail, which, it afterwards developed, they had been mending. Thus they had been at first concealed from view. Now, however, as they sought to bring a part of the rigging into place, a block was dropped with a clatter that caused Captain Harrison to look toward the sloop again quickly.

The two men had now risen and one was using violent language, and in an angry manner. For an end of the block had fallen upon his foot, giving him no little pain. He continued to talk in loud tones, and the other, remonstrating with him in vain, soon lost caution also.

“Let us listen more closely to what they are saying,” Captain Harrison whispered. “Perhaps we shall soon find out all we wish to know. ’Tis

Spanish they are using. You know that language very well, I believe, Mistress Caroline, while I, too, have some knowledge of it."

Caroline had now drawn herself upright and was watching from the other side of the tree.

"One of the men," she said in low tones to Captain Harrison, "is he whom I first saw the day of the grape hunt, while the other, yes, I am quite sure that he is one of those who were at Laurel Hill as Master Fenwicke's servant!"

Listening intently, losing no word they could possibly catch, they were soon in possession of valuable information. There were four of the men, but only two were now aboard the ship. Fenwicke, or Dalton, as we must call him, and another one had gone on a spying expedition to find out if the way were clear. They were expected back any moment now, and the two men were getting the sloop in readiness against their return. At dark the craft was to be headed toward the creek. The men, it seemed, knew the course well.

A mighty desire now tugged at Captain Harrison's heart, the desire to frighten away, or to capture the two men, and to seize the craft ere the other two returned. This desire was rendered all the more intense by the realization that there was now no time at his command to summon aid from the

fort. Besides, the men who had assembled there for work would have dispersed ere he could reach the stockade. So much time had already been lost that unless prompt action were taken the spies would assuredly elude pursuit. Even if he tried to gain Laurel Hill, and, by means of the aid secured there, attempt to stop the men, the effort would no doubt be fruitless. For once the sloop reached the creek she would be off like a gull.

"Now," he said under his breath, "or not at all! Yet, dare I? Yea, *can* I, with these young lives at stake? But," he murmured again, "'tis for Carolina! I judge not wrongly the stuff of which each is made. They will thank me that I give them the opportunity to show their loyalty.

"Mistress Caroline," he said softly, and his face was radiant as he bent nearer, "I have in my mind to use my army of three and Gideon in the service of Carolina. Are you ready?"

For just one moment a wave of color swept into her face, then, as quickly receding, left her very pale.

"Yes, sir, that I am," she answered steadily.

"Then remain here. Get your musket in readiness. When you hear our guns fire, then discharge yours as speedily as you can, and as speedily reload and again fire. Don't aim at the sloop, but fire

over it, for 'twould never do to injure it by bullet-holes. Leave the two men to me and Hector."

"What of Charles, sir?" asked Caroline with tremulous lip.

"Our wounded Gideon will play his part well, no doubt. For the time being he will be safe. I will send Hector now to give him his cue."

He was moving silently away, but turned to add, his face very earnest as he did so:

"Remember above everything to keep well behind the tree, Mistress Caroline. Do not show yourself until you get the word from me."

The two men were still busy with the rigging. They were standing now with their bodies well exposed. The one who had had his foot mashed was still making an angry gesture now and then.

Suddenly the crack of a gun rang out some twenty paces to the left of where Caroline was standing, and almost at the same moment a second followed from a spot at about the same distance to the right of her. Then Caroline's musket spoke, for the brave girl had all this while kept her finger upon the trigger.

Immediately upon the volley from the muskets came the ringing notes of a huntsman's horn, then louder and more vigorous strains, as though a whole company of rangers were being summoned. The

blasts fairly made the echoes ring. While the din was at its height the guns spoke again. All was terror and confusion now aboard the sloop.

Captain Harrison and Hector had shot true to the mark. One man's arm was shattered, while a second bullet had plowed straight through the shoulder of the other. With yells of rage and pain they sank upon the deck. But even in that moment one raised himself to send a ball speeding defiantly toward the forest.

"Move again and you are both dead men!" shouted a determined voice.

"Now, Hector," the voice resumed, "off with the most of your clothing, swim for the canoe, and bring it here. Keep your guns turned on the sloop, men!" Captain Harrison shouted in a louder voice. "If one dares to raise himself, fire."

Though she was trembling with excitement and with a nervous dread, Caroline smiled at this order. It was something to be addressed as a whole army.

"Bravo! Caroline," cried a voice at this moment. "Hurrah for the Carolina Rangers, otherwise the army of three and Gideon!"

It was Charles. The brave fellow had crawled every step of the way to the cypress tree, and as he had toiled along had, at intervals, made his horn do mighty work in awakening the echoes.

Captain Harrison now approached, but at every step he had kept the men on the sloop covered by his musket. At every step, too, he had issued a threat, and he kept talking as though to a company. He was still doubting whether he had done right in leaving the men alive, but he had done it for Caroline's sake.

His heart, too, was filled with apprehension, and questions kept presenting themselves that brought him great uneasiness. How far away were the other men? Would they not hear the shots and speedily return? or would fear of what had happened cause them to seek safety in flight? Would Hector be able to bring the canoe? Might not the men aboard the sloop do him damage after all ere he could secure it? Again Captain Harrison regretted that he had not put an end to them. He fired another shot now by way of reminding them of his presence.

The canoe was one the men had used in going to and from shore. It was a rude affair hollowed out of a cypress log, and no doubt they intended to leave it on the departure of the sloop.

The young black was a fine swimmer. His sinewy arms made powerful strokes through the water. A little more and he would reach the sloop alongside which the canoe was fastened. But at

that very moment when his master shouted encouragement and the trusty musket was trained upon the sloop, the two men, with a sudden cry of defiance, flung themselves over the side of the sloop and into the canoe. With their uninjured hands they cut it loose and began paddling away. For the first moment or so Captain Harrison dared not fire, since Hector was directly on a line with his musket.

In another moment he called to Caroline:

“Fire at the boat. Try to hit this time. We must not let them escape. They may summon the others.”

Even while the words were on his lips his own weapon spoke.

Caroline steadied herself against the tree and took resolute aim, but her heart felt sick. How could she shed blood? Yet these men were enemies, and perhaps her own life was at stake if they escaped. One or both of the shots took effect, for one man fell prone upon his face along the bottom of the boat and both paddles ceased to move. The other man, however, might only have ducked his head to save himself. The canoe now began to drift.

Meanwhile, Hector had reached the sloop and climbed upon it. His master shouted:

“Up anchor, Hector! and bring the sloop as near

as you can with safety. Be careful and don't run her aground."

"Do you think he can do it, sir?" asked Charles quickly.

Captain Harrison intently studied for a moment the movements of the black.

"Nay, I fear he cannot. 'Tis of heavier draught than I thought." Then he called again:

"Keep her so till I come."

"What have you in your mind to do, Captain Harrison?" asked Charles and Caroline almost in the same breath.

"Reach the sloop with what speed I can, and then, with Hector's help, bring her near enough to get you both aboard. We shall have to manage by means of lines, no doubt, and there'll be a wetting for all. But something must be done, and at once, for we cannot stay here."

"You will swim for the sloop, sir?" asked Charles.

"Yes."

"Oh, sir, how I wish that I could bear you company! But this wrenched foot forbids."

He groaned inwardly over his helplessness.

"It is best, no doubt, that you can't come, Charles. You must stay here for what protection you can give your cousin. Keep strict watch, both

of you, not only of the forest, but of the water. The canoe has now drifted out of sight, but there's no telling just what is the condition of its inmates. Then we still have the other two to consider, and one of them is Dalton himself, who will prove no easy task to handle as were the two we've just sent adrift."

Captain Harrison had unbuckled his belt while speaking, and was in the act of divesting himself of his hunting-shirt, when there was a sudden crash through the bushes that caused them all to look up, startled.

Captain Harrison reached again for his musket.

"To cover!" he cried sharply. "The other two **are** no doubt returning."

The twilight had now settled about them, but the light was sufficient to show them a figure running toward them at full speed from the shadow of the trees.

It was Daniel, and as he came he was gesticulating in a manner that showed he was laboring under some great excitement. Daniel had caught the sound of the shots, and, fearing some dreadful trouble for Charles and Caroline, had bravely set out for the spot at topmost speed. He was rejoiced to find them unhurt.

When Daniel learned of what had happened and

of the predicament in which they then were, his face glowed with the intelligence he had to give.

"Dere's a canoe, sir," he said to Captain Harrison, "jus' roun' de myrtle copse, t'other side o' de big tulip. Daniel see 'em dere dis ver' mornin'."

This information was greeted with exclamations of joy, and Daniel was at once dispatched to bring the boat.

In ten minutes more they were all seated within the canoe and on their way to the sloop, which Hector, after much labor, had managed to bring nearer. He had also shouted to them the assurance that there was no one else aboard.

As Charles was helped to a place beside Caroline, he noted that she was trembling and that her face was very white.

"Why, cousin, about to break down now after all that brave exhibition?"

"Nay, Charles, but I am wondering if I did not hit one of the men in the boat. Oh, it makes me heartsick to think that perhaps I did."

"Well, it would serve him no more than right if you did, for he would have taken your life, dear, with no compunction. So come, dismiss the matter from your mind," and he put his arm coaxingly about her.

"We shall no doubt overtake the boat," he added

after a moment, "unless the men are not really fatally hurt, and have sought cover in the woods."

They could just see each others' faces as they gathered on the deck of the sloop, for the night had now closed around them.

"What about the course from here to the creek?" Captain Harrison asked anxiously.

"Daniel knows it, sir, I believe," replied Charles promptly.

Yes, Daniel knew it. Many times he had been over it when fishing for blue cat or spearing eels. However, of late, the blacks had avoided the bayou, as the fear of Indians had restrained them. The bayou, too, bore the name of being haunted. But Daniel felt no tremor of fear now, for he had brave company.

Despite Daniel's knowledge it was a delicate and difficult task to guide the sloop safely through the intricate way. They saw nothing further of the men or the canoe, though they kept as close a watch for them as they could through the semi-darkness. Neither did they encounter Dalton and the companion who had been with him.

"I suspect they received their cue from the others," said Charles, "and, not knowing the strength of our army," here a smile played over his face, "deemed the woods a safer place."

“That, too, is my opinion,” said Captain Harrison. “I am rejoiced they have taken that view of it, for I should not fancy being fired on from ambush.”

The sloop moved on through the tortuous windings of the bayou. There were no sounds save the soft sighing of the wind through the cypresses, the lapping of the water against their trunks, and the occasional hooting of an owl. Yet those aboard kept close watch. Even Charles, still suffering from his injured foot, sat with his musket across his knee, ready for instant action.

Not until the sloop was well out into the creek and scudding along before the wind like a swallow did Captain Harrison deem it safe to have a light aboard. Not until then, either, did they dare take the time to view the cargo. Then to their indignation as well as joy they found the craft loaded with arms and ammunition of every description.

“’Tis enough to arm every Indian for fifty miles!” declared Captain Harrison. “The wretches! what a menace their presence was to our lives! How I wish now we had put an end to those two and that we had the others swinging up to the trees, or safely bound in the hold!”

“How do you think, sir,” asked Charles, “they managed to get into the Cove without detection?”

“I think,” replied Captain Harrison, “that they slipped in at night. Assuredly they had prior knowledge of its course, or they could not have entered safely.”

“And do you think, sir, they have been there for some time?”

“Nay, Charles, I do not; only for a day or two, I am sure. Their intention was, as we know, to slip out at nightfall.”

The more closely they examined the sloop the more they were rejoiced at their capture. The craft was built for both strength and beauty and was splendidly equipped. Painted on her side they found the name *Dove*.

“Did ever craft before sail on so dreadful a mission under so peaceful a title!” exclaimed Charles. “More fitting to have called her the ‘Hawk.’”

“Yes, Charles, or the ‘Vulture.’”

Captain Harrison suddenly changed his tone; his eyes brightened, his face was radiant as he turned it toward Caroline.

“But now we shall change her name to one most fitting indeed; to that of this brave maiden here, to whom her discovery was due, and who has this day borne a noble part in her capture. Mistress Caroline, I salute you,” and now Captain Harrison had removed his hat and was sweeping Caroline a

bow such as he might have bestowed upon the Queen herself; “and in the name of the Province of Carolina I present you this sloop. No longer is she known as the *Dove*, but from this day hence as the *Caroline!*”

CHAPTER XVIII

WARNING

CAROLINE listened to these words with astonishment. Surely she had not heard them aright. Was Captain Harrison merely indulging in a little pleasantry with her? Yet how earnest he looked!

Evidently Charles entertained no doubt on the subject. Captain Harrison had no sooner ceased speaking than the youth began to clap his hands, crying:

“Bravo! here’s to the *Caroline* and to the sweet girl for whom she is named. May the craft take you on many delightful trips, cousin! but certainly she’ll never bear you on any you’ll remember more vividly than this first one.”

“That she will not,” assented Captain Harrison.

“Oh, sir,” exclaimed Caroline as she turned toward him, her eyes misty with feeling, “do you really mean that you will *give* me this beautiful craft, to be all my own?”

“That I do, Mistress Caroline, and right royally glad am I that I can bestow it.”

"But, sir, I so little deserve it. You set too great value upon what I have done. Truly ashamed am I to hear you laud my poor deeds so highly."

"Speak not so, Mistress Caroline. The service you have rendered this day to the Province of Carolina cannot be lightly estimated. But for your coolness and bravery these men would now be bearing to the Indians this cargo so menacing in its nature. With so large a supply of arms and ammunition placed in the hands of our savage foes, I shudder to think what might have been the consequence."

"So, too, do I, sir," spoke Charles quickly. "Our Caroline has indeed done a noble deed this day, and it rejoices my heart, Captain Harrison, to hear you give her the praise that is her meed. Methinks, sir, there will be many to join you in it."

"Yea, Master Charles, assuredly you speak with a tongue of prophecy. 'Twill be but a brief period ere your cousin will awaken to the fact that not only Gilbert Harrison, but all Carolina has words of unstinted praise for conduct so courageous."

"But, sir," faltered Caroline, "this is a costly gift you would bestow, far too costly for even the service you insist that I have rendered. I ask that you will think not of reward for me at all. It pains me that you wish to make recompense for——"

He stopped her with a swift gesture.

“Speak not so. ’Tis not as a reward I would bestow the gift of a sloop, but because of my high esteem for her who has this day proven herself the embodiment of womanly modesty, courage, and patriotism.”

While Caroline hung her head with an exhibition of that modesty for which he had just praised her, Charles exclaimed :

“But, sir, what will the Governor and the Council say if you bestow a gift of such value upon my cousin?”

Captain Harrison returned his look of eager questioning with one of quiet assurance.

“I am satisfied that I can manage the Governor, Master Charles, and I depend on the Governor, in turn, to manage the Council. Besides, think you not they should feel amply repaid in the possession of this valuable cargo of arms and ammunition for the use of their colonists?”

As the *Caroline* neared the Laurel Hill landing they plainly saw lights and moving forms. Both Mr. Ludwell and Mr. Hastings were there, and with them their overseers and a half-dozen boat hands. Growing uneasy at the protracted absence of the young people, and not at all satisfied by the message Jupe had brought, Mrs. Ludwell had im-

portuned her husband and Mr. Hastings as soon as they had returned from the fort, to start on a quest to Buzzard's Cove. It had taken some time to make the arrangements, and they were just now on the point of setting out.

Great was their rejoicing when they caught sight of the approaching sloop and heard the familiar hails from her deck. Philip, who was at the landing, too, answered them until he was almost hoarse. But greater was the rejoicing—in truth, a regular jubilee—when the full story of the capture of the sloop was told. Again Caroline's part in the brave undertaking was lauded to the extent that she had to beg them to desist lest they turn her head with vanity.

Mr. Ludwell was overcome with astonishment and indignation when he learned the character of the man he had entertained.

“The wretch! I am just itching to get my hands on him!”

“So, too, am I,” declared Captain Harrison.

Then he related how he had discovered the true character of Dalton and how he had traced him to the inn to find the bird flown. He had also learned of the presence in the neighborhood of the sloop and its suspected cargo.

“We must set out in search of these scoundrels

this very night!" he concluded. "They must not have the slightest chance to escape."

"That we must!" exclaimed Mr. Ludwell and Mr. Hastings simultaneously.

"Get your dogs, Master Ludwell," continued Captain Harrison. "I hear that you have some that are excellent, one in particular that is renowned as a trailer."

"That he is, Captain. Now I remember," a sudden light breaking over his face, "that Bion vigorously objected to this man from the first, and that while he was here we had to keep the dog shut up."

Though the searchers remained out until after daylight and made thorough investigation of both the creek and the forest, through a circuit extending over several miles, there was no trace of Dalton and his associates. Like a bird in the night, like an eel through the water, the miscreants had slipped away, leaving no clew.

"I have the opinion," said Mr. Ludwell, "that the two villains who were absent during your attack on the sloop, joined the two who were in the canoe, and they have paddled up stream, no doubt seeking some other covert they know."

In this opinion others joined him.

That night, while Caroline was disrobing, the sprig of laurel fell from her dress and lay at her

feet. As she stooped to pick it up, how vividly the events of the day came back to her! especially the scene near the outlet of the old Indian village when Captain Harrison had broken away the twig from the laurel bush and had given it to her. How queerly he had looked! and what strange words he had said with reference to it! She was to keep the bit of laurel, for it was to be the token of a bond that existed between them, of service on her part, of gratitude on his. Should the time ever come, he declared—and how his eyes had glowed as the words were spoken—when she needed the assistance of one with the power to help her—intimating that that one would be himself—she had only to make use of the laurel token.

Caroline was a matter-of-fact girl, and all this sounded somewhat unreal to her, very much as though she had read it out of some old romance, instead of being one of the two principal actors therein. But Captain Harrison had been so truly in earnest, it had been very real to him. As to this, there could be no question in her mind. He had looked all that he spoke. Then came the after events connected with the capture of the sloop, and crowning all his gift to her of the beautiful craft. She could scarce realize even now that the sloop was really hers.

Her speculation deepened as she thought of Captain Harrison. She knew very well that he was no common backwoodsman; neither was he an ordinary scout at the beck and call of superiors. He was too self-assertive for that. He had, too, a masterly air that had at once attracted Caroline. He was, no doubt, a close friend to the Governor, mayhap a member of his Council. His easy grace, his courtly air betokened one used to drawing rooms. Why he elected to pass so much of his time in the woods, surrounded by Indians, or again with only the companionship of his black servant, Hector, was a mystery. It was doubtless that he could do more effective service in this way for the Governor and the Council.

The next morning she showed her uncle and aunt the sprig of laurel, relating to them all that had occurred in connection with its bestowal.

“Captain Harrison is a man of no small distinction,” her uncle remarked. “I thought that of him the first day we met on Salkehatchie; nor have I changed my opinion of him in one whit since. He is evidently acting for one vested with authority; no doubt the Governor himself. I know that he stands very close to the executive, for he told me that he knew Craven intimately.”

The news of the capture of the sloop soon spread

through the neighborhood, and Caroline's embarrassment increased as she found herself so firmly established in the hearts of the people as a heroine. They could not give her praise enough. The Governor and Council sent her a letter, thanking her for the brave part in the undertaking and ratifying the gift of the sloop.

The beautiful craft was the source of deep interest and of much delighted comment on the part of her young friends. They never tired of examining it, or of praising its gracefulness. Within a week, two fine excursions had been theirs by means of it. They were even planning a trip to Charles Town.

One morning, just eight days after the capture of the sloop, Anthony Hastings came very hastily to Laurel Hill. Caroline was the first to see him, as she was on the lawn gathering a bunch of lilac blooms. She noted at once his troubled expression.

"What ho! Sir Anthony!" she cried gayly. "What cloud has fallen upon you this morning? For shame to give it resting place when all around the sun is smiling so!"

"Speak not hastily, Mistress Caroline. 'Tis disturbing news indeed I bring. No wonder your eyes so readily detect the cloud."

Quickly her own countenance became grave.

"What ill news is it you bring, Anthony?"

“At an early hour this morning, ere we were more than gathered at table for our repast, Mistress Fraser, the wife of John Fraser, the Scotchman, came to my mother. A startling thing had happened an hour or so before. Sanutee, one of the chiefs of the Yamassees, appeared at her home. He carried a handful of sweet herbs, and almost immediately upon entering asked for a basin of water. Bruising the herbs in the liquid, he humbly asked for Master and Madam Fraser the privilege of bathing their faces with the scented water. Wondering, they consented; whereupon, he not only bathed their faces, but taking the hands of each in turn, laid them against his breast. This he declared he did that through all the future they might know his heart.”

“Why, what a strange proceeding!”

“Was it not. But I have not told you all.”

“After reminding them that he had cause to be grateful to them—’tis said that Master Fraser did once mightily befriend him—he told them that a terrible doom overhung the settlement of Goose Creek, that the blow would soon fall, and entreated them to depart with all speed for Charles Town.”

“’Tis indeed disturbing news you bear,” asserted Caroline. “But think you this Indian knew whereof he spoke?”

“He is one of the head men of the Yamassees,

and 'tis from this nation, as all reports agree, the blow is to descend upon us."

"What thinks your father of the occurrence?"

They had now nearly reached the house, and Caroline was glad to see her uncle on the piazza.

"He thinks no more of it than he has of similar warnings that have come. He believes there will be trouble, but he is not in favor of an exodus to Charles Town. He declares that the blockhouse will give us all the protection we need.

"Madam Fraser, poor soul!" continued Anthony, "was so disturbed that she had the mind to start at once for the city. She begged my mother to persuade father also into making preparations for departure, as she knew her husband would not do so until he was convinced that others shared the alarm."

"I am so glad my uncle is here," said Caroline, as Anthony was assisting her up the steps. "Let us see what he thinks of the occurrence."

"That is just what my father sent me to ascertain," said Anthony. "He desires to know if Master Ludwell, after hearing what I have to communicate, deems it best to give heed to the warning, that is, to go into the blockhouse as soon as possible."

"Oh, I hope it will not be as bad as that!"

"Good-morning, Anthony," was Mr. Ludwell's

cheery salutation as the two young people ascended the steps. "I see you have taken an early beginning to-day. It must be a matter of great importance to have started you off with the sun," and he looked somewhat significantly at Caroline.

"'Tis indeed most important, sir," replied Anthony, so engrossed with that he had come to tell as to be unconscious of the meaning glance.

Hastening to Mr. Ludwell he repeated in a very clear and earnest manner the story of the visit of the Yemassee chief to the home of the Frasers, and of Mrs. Fraser's hurried call upon his mother.

"My father is anxious to know, Master Ludwell," concluded Anthony, "if you deem it wise to send out the alarm so that the families may take refuge in the fort. Some of them may desire to proceed to Charles Town."

While disturbed over the tidings, Mr. Ludwell, nevertheless, advised further consideration of the matter before spreading the alarm.

"Tell your father I will be with him in an hour's space, Anthony. I will also bring Masters Broughton and Gibbes. We can then talk over the matter and decide what is best to be done."

"My father will be glad of this, sir," asserted Anthony. "He is very desirous to have speedy conference touching this matter."

"Uncle, you don't really think there is great danger, do you?"

Caroline had approached and now stood with her arm about his shoulder, leaning against him affectionately.

"There is always danger, my child, though one can never tell accurately as to its nearness. So many rumors have come, and yet the blow has not descended. I will say this much for your comfort, dear; it is our firm belief that, with our present excellent system of patrol service, it will be impossible for the Indians to fall upon us unawares. We shall have warning in ample time to reach the fort. But it behooves us," he added with conviction, "to make our preparations so that we shall be ready to depart on a moment's notice."

Anthony had devoted himself to Charles ever since the accident, and had been over every day to see him. His interview with Mr. Ludwell concluded, he ran up to Charles' room. He was rejoiced to find his friend well advanced on the road to recovery.

"You'll be out now in a day or so," declared Anthony cheerily. "You must hasten, Charles, to get your leg all right again. It would never do for the Indians to come while you are unable to run."

He said this as though it were a good joke, but

all the while he was thinking what a grave situation it would be for Charles in the event that sudden flight had to be made.

He did not tell Charles of the occurrence at the Frasers', as he did not wish to cause him unnecessary disturbance.

Charles grew better and stronger every day. Soon he was able to get downstairs. How much he had come to depend upon Caroline through the trying days of confinement had been a revelation. That she had grown very dear he did not hesitate to admit, not only to himself, but to others.

"Ah, mother," he said one day, "you asserted that the time would come when Caroline would prove a blessing to each one of us. I could not believe it, for I was willful enough to refuse to see aught then that promised it. How clearly my eyes have been opened since! When I think of all the mean things I did to that dear girl, I can scarce look her in the eyes for the very shame of them."

"Your cousin both forgets and forgives, Charles; then why distress her by showing her that you still remember? Caroline wishes you, too, to forget. She is truly a noble girl."

"Oh, mother, how *can* I forget all the unkind things I said and did? the evil thoughts I cherished? how that I even believed she sought to take

your love away from us? Mother, if I were to live a thousand years I could never forget those moments in the woods, when she came to me, and, bending over me, showed so plainly how truly noble is her heart. Blind was I that I could not see it before."

"But now that your eyes have been opened, Charles, and your conduct toward our dear girl has been all that even her affectionate nature could desire, why dwell upon the past? Why grieve her by referring to it?"

"I feel, dear mother, that I *must* tell her, over and over again, what a mean creature I consider myself for having treated her as I did."

"But that only distresses your cousin, Charles, as I have said. There is only one thing Caroline desires of you now."

"And that, mother?"

She hesitated. Was his reformation really complete?

"And that, mother?" he repeated.

"That you will give her the place in your heart that—that——"

She was troubled with herself that she could not complete the sentence. Was it really wise to finish it?

To her joy, his face brightened suddenly.

“Mother! mother!” he cried. “I know what you would say, that I give her the place in my heart that would have been for my sister. Know then that it was only this morning I called her by that sweet name.”

A radiant smile came into his mother’s face. She stooped and kissed him.

“Joy overflows my heart, Charles, to hear you say that.”

These words were all, but the light in the fond eyes bent upon him said much more. He realized now how he had grieved this dear mother by his conduct toward Caroline.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BUNDLE OF RED STICKS

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the capture of the sloop, and it was now the sixth day following the warning of the chief, Sanutee, and yet all was quiet throughout the Goose Creek settlement. The patrols continued to report that there were no signs of hostile Indians. Strict military regulations had been enforced and armed men were constantly on the watch.

Every Friday afternoon it was the custom of the young people of the neighborhood to gather at the parsonage for the purpose of being catechized by the minister of St. James, Dr. LeJau. These occasions brought not only profit, but pleasure, for the good curé was as popular with his younger parishioners as with the older ones.

He had been with them now nearly a score of years, had baptized most of the younger ones, and administered the Communion to nearly all of the older ones time and again. They were as dear to him as though they were his own children, for was he not their spiritual father?

Caroline had joined this class very soon after her arrival, and in the days and weeks that followed a deep affection as well as reverence had sprung up within her heart for the minister of St. James. He was so good, so painstaking, and there was about him such an air of sweet dignity and of earnestness, that her heart had gone out to him from the first, and had grown all the stronger in its allegiance as time passed.

It was a gay party that set out from Laurel Hill on this particular Friday afternoon. Anthony, Elizabeth, and Sarah had stopped at Laurel Hill for Caroline, Charles, and Philip. All the young people were mounted, as Charles' foot was now so fully restored that he could ride with ease. Pollux had now become the property of Caroline, Charles' gift to her, and very happy she was in his possession.

The young people had much about which to talk. The capture of the sloop was still an exciting theme. A part of their conversation turned upon the warning of the Frasers. The Scotchman and his wife had not yet departed for Charles Town. As the outlook was still reassuring, they seemed to have regained their confidence.

Nevertheless, despite the assured state of feeling, it was noticeable that with the groups of young people riding toward the parsonage of St. James

on this Friday afternoon there went two or more armed men. With the party from Crow's Nest and Laurel Hill were Daniel and two of the white servants. Sometimes the attendants were the fathers and grown brothers of those they accompanied.

The good minister had arranged for his class under the wide-spreading branches of the oaks in front of the house. Rude benches of puncheon were set in rows. Behind them, placed here and there, were cypress and cedar blocks of from one to two feet in diameter. These were for such of those accompanying the young people as wished to be listeners.

It was observed by several that afternoon that those men, both black and white, showed not the usual tendency to congregate within sound of the old minister's voice. Instead they gathered in little groups some distance away, engaging in conversation of the most earnest nature. At times their gestures were so animated and their tones so incautiously raised as to attract the attention of those of the young people nearest to them. But Dr. LeJau, intent with his catechizing, took no heed of it.

"They are talking about the Yamassees," said Anthony to Charles.

The two boys were at the end of the last row of

seats and could hear scraps of the conversation quite plainly.

"I do believe they have heard some ill news," he continued. "Some of the men are very much excited."

"I fear it is ill news," commented Charles. "But then the patrols are vigilant. The Indians cannot slip upon us, I am sure."

He had scarcely spoken when there came the loud clatter of horses' feet upon the road, and within a short space of time a rider appeared coming at a breakneck pace along the avenue of oaks. Even Dr. LeJau's attention was attracted now. He paused in the midst of a question. Astonishment was on his face, and something, too, of agitation. His pupils began to scatter right and left. There were cries of dismay. Many began to ask what it could mean, and more than one face went white with fear.

The groups of men showed even more excitement. Some hallooed out, others began running toward the reckless rider, as though to catch his bit and halt him ere he did damage.

"'Tis John Fraser!" cried a high-pitched voice. "What can ail him? Halt, man! Can it be that the Old Nick himself is after you that you ride in this breakneck manner?"

Fraser returned no answer. Perhaps he had not heard. At any rate, he swung himself from his horse, and made straight toward Dr. LeJau; then, mounting a block, seemed at last to have found his voice.

“ ’Tis Master Fraser,” said Philip to Caroline, for, on the first manifestation of alarm, he had quickly sought her, and was standing beside her now in a protecting way that caused something very sweet to stir at her heart. “ ’Tis the Scotchman to whom the Yamassee chief came with a warning. Can it be that the Indian has appeared again? and are those red fiends at last about to fall upon us? Of a truth, Master Fraser is much excited, and see how ashen he is! ”

Philip’s own face had turned a shade or two whiter within the last few moments, though he did not know it.

“ Friends and neighbors,” cried the excited Scotchman, “ hear me in the warning I bring! and if any man there be who recklessly disregards it, then let his fate be upon his own head!

“ No more than an hour ago Sanutee, the Yamassee, came to me. He implored me to make all haste to flee to Charles Town. This is the second time he has brought the alarm to me and mine, because of some kindness I once had it in my power to

bestow. The first time it was more to lead me to prepare for flight. But this warning, he declares, is imperative. I must flee ere to-morrow's sun rises."

"What reason has the Indian for urging you to immediate flight?"

It was Dr. LeJau who spoke, and his voice was quite firm. He was endeavoring to be calm for the sake of the others.

"The most pressing one that he could have. The red sticks, sent out by the Yamassees to each of the tribes they desire to have join them in this extermination of the whites, have all come back. The bundle is now complete, and Sanutee declares there is to be a horrible massacre, which includes not only the inhabitants of this section, but of all Carolina."

"I have heard of these red sticks before," said Charles to Caroline. He too, had approached and stood beside her.

"So have I," spoke Anthony. "Only a few days ago I heard my father discussing it with yours. They seemed to attach great importance to these emblems. O-co-nos-tee had given them much information on that point. I know he dreaded the coming back of these sticks stained with the blood of the Yamassees, as each, in turn, meant the acceptance by a particular tribe of the challenge."

“Now to think they have *all* come back!” said Philip, his voice trembling, and unconsciously he placed his arm about Caroline, as though he would protect her even now from the danger. “Oh, I fear me there is going to be terrible trouble!”

“The sticks have come back,” repeated Mr. Fraser, “a more vivid red than before, for they have been re-stained by the blood of those to whom they have been sent.”

“This is indeed serious news that you bring, neighbor,” commented Dr. LeJau. “But I do not see what further can be done than has already been accomplished. We have lived in the midst of alarms for some time, momentarily expecting the Indians to rise and fall upon us. The fort is ready, is both fortified and provisioned. Pickets are out in every direction. They are to watch for the Indian approach and to notify each family in time to make safe flight to the fort.”

“And you are depending upon *that?*” inquired Mr. Fraser, his voice rising shrilly, his gaze turning incredulously from one to the other. “If such be the case, then ’tis shaky support indeed on which you are. Know you not that the fort itself cannot stand against the horde that will sweep down upon it? More than six thousand of the Indians are already in arms. Men, brethren, flee while yet

there is time. Think of your wives and children. Seek the fortifications of the city, for that, I beg you hearken unto me, is the only safe place now. Thither I go with my family as soon as I can give the alarm to others. I must discharge my duty in this matter, even at the risk of my life."

His impassioned appeal won upon two or three. They started at once for their homes to make ready for the flight to the city. But the majority were with the minister. The patrols would surely give the alarm in time. They were alert and quick-witted. Besides, it was foolish to say that the fort could not withstand the attack of all the Indians that could be mustered against it. They were willing to risk it.

Mr. Hastings and Mr. Ludwell were two of those who stood with the minister when Fraser's warning was repeated to them.

"We will stay and fight here," declared the former. "We have more than our defense at stake. We have our homes to protect. If we flee to the city every plantation, from the Cooper to the Ashley, will be laid in ruins."

These were sentiments in which Mr. Ludwell fully concurred.

"But I don't like the fact of *all* those blood-stained sticks coming back," he said more than once

to Mr. Hastings; "it shows a more general uprising than we anticipated."

"I am afraid it does," admitted Mr. Hastings reluctantly.

There was now throughout the Goose Creek settlement a condition of affairs that amounted almost to a panic on the part of many. Some families removed at once to the blockhouse, but others still clung to their homes, trusting to the patrols and to the local militia, which was commanded by the brave young Huguenot, Jean Chiquan, to give them the alarm in time. They kept ready for flight at any moment.

The families of Laurel Hill and Crow's Nest were among those to remain in their homes; so, too, did the good pastor of St. James keep to his parsonage. He was inclined to take a very hopeful view of the Indian situation. Although the outlook was truly threatening, he, nevertheless, like a number of others, had great faith in the ability of the Governor and Council to get control of affairs.

It was known that, three days prior to the alarm spread by the Scotchman, John Fraser, the Governor had dispatched a commission to the capital town of the Yamassees to treat with the Indians. This commission consisted of some of the leading men of the Province, among them Masters John

Wright, John Cochran, and Thomas Ruffly. At the head of this commission was Captain Nairne, a renowned Indian trader and now Agent of Indian Affairs.

As has been intimated, hopes were built high on this commission, especially upon the ability of its leader to cope successfully with the Indian trouble.

“What men can do, these will,” was the declaration that fell from many lips.

It was this faith in the success of the Indian commission that contributed in so large a degree to the feeling of calmness still prevalent among those of the Goose Creek settlers who had elected to remain at their homes. Even though the bundle of red sticks was reported to have come back, yet so long as the commission had not returned unsuccessful the feeling of hope remained.

The Frasers had given speedy heed this time to the warning of the chief, for at daybreak on the following morning they had set out for Charles Town. A few families accompanied them. Mr. Fraser had entreated Dr. LeJau to join the refugees, but the good minister, apart from the faith he yet had that the Indian trouble would soon be peacefully settled, declared he would not forsake his people.

“I will stand by my people whatsoever comes,”

he said. "Having been with them in their prosperity, I have no conscience to desert them in a time of danger. As much as they have needed me heretofore they will need me then tenfold more. For if I go who will read prayers for them, who will attend the sick, the wounded, or give consolation to the dying?"

Mr. Hastings and Mr. Ludwell were among the few who felt grave concern for the safety of the men sent to the Yamassee town. On the morning of the flight of the Frasers they were engaged in earnest conversation with reference to the probable outcome of the negotiations then supposed to be in progress at Po-ca-tal-i-go, the capital city of the Yamassees.

"While the Indians may do us no harm here," remarked Mr. Ludwell, "still I believe great danger overhangs those at Po-ca-tal-i-go. The red men are massed at that point, holding complete possession, in fact, of the surrounding territory for many miles. Any attempts made by the whites to break through their ranks would prove unavailing. The Indians realize this, that their stronghold is well-nigh impregnable, and would thus be led to commit some foul deed. It is the thought of this," he concluded, his face very grave, "that makes me fear for the lives of the men sent to Po-ca-tal-i-go."

“So, too, do I feel, neighbor,” admitted Mr. Hastings. “I haven’t liked the idea from the first, of sending those few men to the Yamassee capital; though I did, and do heartily approve of the Governor’s efforts to seek reconciliation with the Indians. But there ought to have been two commissions, one of Indians as well as of whites, and the two should have met on half-way ground.”

“Exactly my opinion,” declared Mr. Ludwell. “I have so said from the first. That a serious blunder has been made I sadly fear me. I was uneasy before. I am doubly so now since receiving the intelligence that the bundle of red sticks had come back newly crimsoned.”

“Yea, truly that is a bad omen! a bad omen!” repeated Mr. Hastings.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE MYRTLE COPSE

IT was that very afternoon Caroline went on an errand for her aunt that led to a startling encounter and to other results even more startling in their nature.

For some days past Mrs. Ludwell had had a number of the little negroes employed in digging and cleaning the roots of the sassafras bush, which, when partly dried and made into tea, was considered a fine remedy for blood disorders. It is also a pleasant and refreshing drink.

“If we are driven to the fort and compelled to remain there long,” Mrs. Ludwell had remarked, “we shall assuredly need the sassafras.”

Back of the sheep pasture, some two or three hundred yards in the rear of the premises, the bushes grew in abundance. Beyond them was a strip of pine barren, and skirting it a dense coppice of wax myrtles. From the berries of these candles were made.

On this particular afternoon the little negroes

having remained away unusually long, Caroline volunteered to go and see what detained them. She found them playing and not through their task. They had dug the roots, but had not yet collected them.

Caroline gave them a chiding. Then, while they were gathering up their little scattered heaps of the roots, she walked toward the pine barren. Her aunt had told her that she felt sure the guineas were laying somewhere in that direction, and Caroline thought this a capital opportunity to look for their nests. Absorbed in her quest, she passed through the grove of young pine saplings and was well into the myrtle copse ere she knew it. There was an opening at the point where she had entered, as though the bodies of small animals, burrowing from time to time, had made it. There was also a path which Caroline had been following.

When Caroline at last realized how far into the myrtle copse she was, she turned to retrace her steps. She had just done so when some one spoke her name.

“ Mistress Caroline! Mistress Caroline! ”

The name was repeated. The sounds came suddenly, and the speaker was so near to her without having been seen that Caroline fell back a step or two, her heart beating rapidly. Again the name

was spoken, and now she saw him who had uttered it. It was he who had come to Laurel Hill, calling himself Edward Fenwicke, but whom she now knew as Captain Dalton, the leader of the Spanish spies!

Caroline's first impulse was to spring away from him and to take flight as the deer would before the hunter. She did move several paces toward the opening, but, ere she could pass through, he, having followed her, implored her in so humble and so beseeching a manner to remain that in wonder she turned to him again.

He showed great surprise at her desire to flee from him.

"Mistress Caroline," he said reproachfully, "why this fear of me? What have I done to cause this change in your conduct toward me? Dost forget that I was but recently an honored guest in your uncle's home? Why, then, this look of terror with which you regard me? Why the impulse to flee from me?"

If these words were spoken in sincerity, then they were evidence that he knew naught of Caroline's part in the capture of the sloop. But no doubt he was only trying her.

Seeing that she still trembled and could not yet answer, he drew nearer, imploring her by gesture

to remain. Despite this Caroline again moved away.

“No doubt I am a forbidding spectacle at present for a young girl’s eyes,” he said with some bitterness. “But when one has been for days pushing through brambly growths, or sinking to one’s knees in the mire of the swamps, with no better resting-place at night than the ground, and no food save that which his weapons procure, ’tis no matter for speculation if his appearance is such as would not grace a lady’s drawing room.”

His smile at his own humor was not a pleasant one. He paused as though waiting for her to speak. She still remained silent. It was as though the power of speech had taken flight. Her faculties seemed paralyzed at the suddenness of the encounter. He was determined to make her speak. He edged nearer, keeping his eyes upon her face.

“You did not expect my return for some space yet?”

“Nay, I did not.”

She had found her voice at last. She was looking at him steadily now.

“Nor after this fashion?”

Again the negative came promptly.

“I had myself intended that it should be in far different manner. Hear me, Mistress Caroline, for

'twas for this I implored you to remain. I remember that you did give me earnest ear through the days that I was at Laurel Hill. For none more than for you did the account of my experiences have interest."

"I remember it very well. For what object do you now remind me?"

He gave her a swift look. In his face was the expression of one taken by surprise.

"Why speak in such harsh, cold tone? What have I done to deserve it? Surely it is not because misfortune has overtaken me. Nay, I cannot, I will not believe this of *you!*"

He had come nearer. He was looking at her now with a strange, an indescribable expression. His face was strikingly handsome even in its extreme pallor; his deep-set eyes glowed luminously. It was as though they had for her a soft and tender light.

Wonder stirred at her heart, and something more than wonder. But quickly remembrance came of what this man was.

"Sir, what you have to say to me, will you please say it quickly? for I must soon be gone."

He looked about him with swift intentness. The happy laughter of the little negroes was plainly borne to them. Across the broomsedge came the voice of Daniel calling to the cows.

“Come deeper within the copse,” he entreated.
“There is that I *must* say to you.”

“I cannot,” she replied firmly. “You must say it to me here.”

Again she was growing afraid of him. Had she not cause? Had not her own eyes and ears and the testimony of late events betrayed his true character?

“Why do you fear me?” He was scrutinizing her face closely. “What has occurred to cause such distrust as I now see plainly you entertain toward me?”

“You need not ask that question Master—Captain Dalton. For it seems to me you would already understand.”

He drew back as though she had struck him. On either cheek a vivid spot of crimson flamed.

“You *know*?” he asked huskily.

“Yes, I know.”

“Then it will be useless to beseech the succor of you I crave?”

She was provoked with herself that she felt her heart stir with pity because of the despair so plainly pictured in his face. Nevertheless she answered steadily:

“I cannot aid you in any way.” She paused, then continued with hot indignation:

“How can you have the face to ask help of me or of any one of those hereabouts whose trust you have so shamelessly betrayed? For is it not your hand that has supplied to our Indian foes the muskets and the ammunition with which our lives are to be taken? Is it not your false tongue that speaks words of friendship to us at the one moment and at the next arouses against us the hatred of these savage men?”

His eyes fell before her steady gaze. The scarlet in his cheeks spread and deepened.

“Too harshly you speak by far,” he said at length. “There is explanation I could make, but time presses. Every moment I stay here increases my danger. I pray you to believe I am not half the wretch you have pictured. I have been sadly wronged, and,” he added with keen bitterness, “I am hunted as though I were some vicious beast ’twere doing a noble service to slay.”

The sun was now close to setting. Its last rays fell across his face, accentuating the haggardness, the weariness of its expression. His mouth, too, had a piteous droop, and there was a pinched look in the cheeks that spoke of hunger. Again she felt that pang of pity for him, and again was provoked with herself because of it. Thus she spoke without faltering.

"Sir, I must be going. I can no longer remain here."

"'Tis to give me up you go?"

His haggard face had a half defiant, half despairing expression.

For a moment her eyes faltered, but in the next she regarded him steadily.

"Could you expect aught else after that which you have done?"

He took a step or two forward, thus placing himself directly in front of the outlet. He made, too, as though he would lay hand upon her, but, seeing again that look of swift terror with which she had at first regarded him, desisted. There was naught in his face as he turned it to her own that boded ill to her. Instead there was a quiver of emotion in his voice, of some indescribable feeling that struck her with surprise.

"Hear me!" he implored. "Well I know that I deserve much of that of which you have accused me. I admit with shame that I have not been that which I ought to have been. I see now when too late whither the course on which I launched recklessly has led me; the rocks on which my life's craft, never prosperous since that one fateful turn of the tide, has drifted to despair and ruin. But 'tis not of this I would now talk to you. As a

human being, irrespective of that which I have done to the hurt of others, yea, and to my own, I appeal to you; as one hunted, driven to despair, caring for naught now save the one thing that I may live to redeem myself. I beg the aid that you can give me to escape."

"To escape that you may work still further harm not only to those of the neighborhood, knit to us by the ties of kindliness and friendship, but also to me and mine? Nay, rather would I die here stricken by your hand for refusing!"

His face darkened for a moment. The old passionate headstrong spirit rushed with full flood upon him. For the moment she thought she would be given the choice for which she had so courageously declared. But the look passed from him, and again there was that about him, in face, in voice, in manner, that stirred her heart with strange feeling.

"You will go and tell the news of my whereabouts, thinking thus to lessen the danger to those who are friends, neighbors? Yea, for those you love, who are allied to you by ties of blood, you would risk even your own life?"

He was looking at her now in so strange a way that her eyes drooped before his burning gaze.

"Noble girl!" he exclaimed. "I might have

known it. 'Tis the blood telling! Naught remains now but to disclose the truth."

He was on the point of proceeding, but she stayed him.

"I know not what it is you would say, nor do I desire to learn of that which you term the truth. The knowledge that I already have is more than I wish me I possessed."

She paused. Then, as she gazed at him unflinchingly, she added:

"I saw you aboard the sloop. Yea, more, I was with those who made capture of it."

He stared at her incredulously, as one incapable of understanding.

"You were with those who made capture of the sloop?" he repeated as though he were beyond the power of words of his own. Then one further word escaped him, "Impossible!"

"Yea, 'tis not impossible since truly was I there. First of all I saw you sitting on the deck and heard what you said to the two men who were with you. I was hunting my cousin and lost my way in the swamp. 'Twas from the shelter of a great cypress along the edge of the bayou that I heard and saw all. Later I pointed out the way to those who made capture of the sloop."

She expected to see his face flame with rage as

she gave him this information. Yes, brave indeed had she been to tell him these things. To give him knowledge of the part she had taken in thwarting him, to announce in so bold a way the extent to which his present condition was due to her.

To her astonishment instead of uttering words of rage and making movement to do her some injury, as she expected, his head went down as though he were overwhelmed by shame, and she could see him trembling as in the throes of some mighty emotion.

“Say no more,” he entreated. “Already that which you have disclosed crushes me to the earth. My bitterest enemy would be satisfied now with the punishment that has overtaken me. Oh, it is death a thousand times to——”

His voice broke here and died in a husky whisper in his throat.

She looked at him more and more astonished. Despite all that she knew of this man’s character she began to feel now an awakening touch of pity for him. Had he told her that which was true? Was he more sinned against than sinning?

He raised his face and his lips moved as though he understood and was about to answer her inward questioning. There was that in the pathos of his face, in the suppliancy of his gesture that caused her

heart to stir as the young birdling in the nest quivers beneath the strange hand laid upon it.

“Hear me,” he entreated. “I am driven to disclose that which I thought never to let pass my lips.”

He had moved a step nearer. His hand was raised, then extended as though he would place it upon her. But at that moment there came sounds that struck terror to the heart of each. The distant firing of muskets, many of them together; loud cries and hoarse shouts of anger and of pain; then blood-curdling yells as of demons wreaking their will. The noises came from a spot some distance away, and though they were somewhat dulled by the distance they were none the less startling. Almost unconsciously each sprang toward the opening. The face of each was very white and eyes mutely questioned eyes. Dalton had grasped the arm of Caroline, but she was unaware of it. He seemed in the greater panic of the two. Doubtless he had the more reason to be, since to him the nature of the sounds had made itself the more clearly understood. Yet as he ran he asked a question, “What can it mean?” despite that in his heart already the answer had been written.

Caroline essayed to speak, but ere the sentence was more than begun a shout sounded near to them,

and Charles was seen running toward them, bare-headed, his attire in disorder, and behind him Philip and Jupe. The latter was screaming in a frantic way as though beside himself with fright.

CHAPTER XXI

“SAVE THE POWDER!”

THE boys were running straight across the field toward the house, and Charles was almost opposite to Caroline ere he saw her. His cries had been directed to the little negroes.

“The Indians!” he shouted again. “The Indians! Fly to the house and thence to the fort! The Indians are coming!”

They needed no further urging. With yells of terror they threw down whatever they had in hand and began to rush in a panic toward the designated harbor of safety.

Charles saw Caroline now and he paused in his flight.

“Caroline,” he cried, “come! Lose not a moment in reaching the house. The Indians are but the third of a mile away, a band of more than three hundred of them. They stole past the patrols in broken squads. Even now they would be upon us but for the noble work of Captain Chiquan and a small detachment of the militia! But this handful

cannot long hold the red fiends back. We are sent to spread the alarm and to bid all within our reach to fly to the blockhouse. I——”

He broke off abruptly, for now he had caught sight of Dalton, who, in order to avoid Charles' eyes, had partly withdrawn behind a clump of myrtle bushes.

For one swift moment Charles glanced at Caroline as though to question her being here with this man. Then as he seemed intuitively to grasp somewhat of the circumstances of the meeting, he sprang toward Dalton with uplifted hand, while quickly following him came Philip.

“Wretch!” cried Charles. “Miserable betrayer of those who have befriended you, have we indeed caught you at last? Help me seize him, Philip. We surely can overpower him. Caroline, too, will lend us aid, I doubt not.”

But Dalton was too quick for them. With a cry of defiance he sprang away and was soon completely enveloped by the bushes.

Charles made as though he would follow him, but a second thought restrained him.

“Time is too precious,” he cried, “to waste in pursuit of the wretch. How did you ever come up with him, cousin?”

As they sped toward the house Caroline told him

as best she could how she had chanced to meet with Dalton.

“The villain!” exclaimed Charles. “I only wish we could have seized him and secured help in dragging him to the blockhouse. He would there have received, I know, what he deserves.”

“So, too, do I wish,” added Philip. “It seems too bad we missed him after having him almost within our grasp!”

Caroline said nothing. She was thinking deeply despite the panic of fear by which they were now surrounded through the Indian alarm. How strangely this man, Dalton, had acted! What queer words he had said to her! How intense was the emotion he had displayed! What could it all mean?

All was now terror and confusion. The little negroes were scurrying like frightened rabbits, some toward the house, others in the direction of the quarters. A pandemonium of sounds prevailed, screams, shouts, prayers for mercy. To these were soon added the cries of the older negroes running in from the fields.

Charles, Caroline, and Philip sped straight toward the house. At the gate opening into the stable yard Philip parted from them.

“I must go and get Pollux, as father directed,

and ride further to spread the alarm. Cousin, you have no objection to his serving in so good a cause, have you, even though it may be to his own hurt?"

"That have I not, Philip," she answered quickly, her eyes meeting his with a brave flash. "I am indeed rejoiced that he can bear you safely on so noble an errand." She paused, then added, half in question, half in entreaty, "But you will spare him all you can?"

Philip's reply came heartily:

"That I will, cousin."

"Caroline," said Charles as they ran on toward the house, "I must return yonder as soon as I can get my musket."

He pointed in the direction whence the sounds of combat were still coming, multiplied now many times it seemed to them.

"Oh, Charles, I thought you would surely stay and help us with the things we must carry to the fort."

"Nay, Caroline, I cannot, as much as I want to do this. My place is *yonder*, where brave men, and even boys like myself, are struggling to keep back those red fiends. If they should fail——"

He paused for lack of courage to proceed. The straits were more desperate than he had let her

know. Yet, noting the distressed look she turned toward him, he quickly added :

“ But do not take it so to heart, my Caroline. We *must* drive them back. Yea, in an hour’s time we hope to join you at the fort.”

They had proceeded but halfway across the yard when they met Mrs. Ludwell hastening to them. She had heard the sounds of the firing, the shouts and screams of the negroes. Looking out of the window she had caught sight of the scurrying forms. Only too well she realized what it all meant.

“ Tell me the worst quickly, Charles,” she commanded.

She was deathly white, but there was a resolute light in her eyes, which said plainly that now the blow had really fallen she would meet it with fortitude.

“ The Indians have attacked the settlement, mother, full three hundred strong. They slipped past the posts. Three score of the militia under Captain Chiquan, with about a score more of the settlers who were not in arms, are holding them in check. Some of the negroes, too, are standing bravely by us. Unless another band of Indians joins this one quickly, we hope to rout them in an hour or so; or at least to hold them in check until we can retreat to the fort.”

“And is your father there—in the midst of the attack?”

Mrs. Ludwell's voice quivered, but she still bravely held herself together.

“Yes, mother; he it was who sent me to spread the alarm, and he begs that you and Caroline will seek the fort with all speed.”

“And you, Charles?”

“Mother, I must go back as soon as I can get my musket. I am *needed* there.”

She offered no word of protest; only drew his face to her and kissed him passionately, while the sob she strove so bravely to suppress broke in her throat.

Caroline quickly threw her arms about her, urging her back toward the house. Her own tears were falling, yet she, too, had resolved to be brave.

In a little while all the paths converging upon the main one leading to the fort were alive with fleeing groups. Some were on horseback, but the majority went afoot. All were more or less laden; many, as is usual in the time of a panic, burdened by the most useless things they possessed.

Caroline had seen her old black servant, Chloe, go off with the rest. She was wringing her hands and deploring the day that ever they had come to “dis wild Injun country to be killed lak [like]

cattle.” Mrs. Ludwell had also been urged to take her place among those servants who went first, that she might encourage them and help them set an example it would stimulate the others to follow. Thus, Caroline hoped, all might be conveyed to the fort with far less panic. She had remained behind to assist some of the weaker ones and the children who had lagged.

Caroline had proceeded but a short distance, when she suddenly heard her name shouted. Turning, she saw Charles running toward her and gesticulating frantically. Without hesitating she started back to meet him, realizing that he had some urgent need of her.

Charles was almost breathless from hard running, but he managed to gasp out as soon as she came near him:

“The powder, Caroline! The powder! It has been left behind! and in the panic I fear no one else will think to carry any to the fort. What will they do without it? Oh, Caroline, *save the powder!*”

This was enough for Caroline. Then and there came the resolution to save the powder at any cost.

“Do not worry, Charles,” she cried to him, “I will see that the powder is carried.”

He thought she meant that she would call back some of the servants to assist her. So, waiting to

hear no more, Charles turned and sped toward the sound of the firing, growing more distinct now, as though the combatants drew nearer.

Caroline retraced her steps, calling to the servants, but not one of them was in sight; only a few children, and they were hastening on after the others with frantic speed. She sped back along the path, calling in louder tones. Not a voice answered her. So far as she could see in every direction the forest was deserted.

"I must save what I can alone," was Caroline's thought.

Resolutely she turned in the direction of the house. Not a moment was to be lost, she realized. Nearer and nearer came the sounds of the firing. So close now were the fiendish yells as to chill the blood in her veins.

She reached the house, sped along the hall, turning thence into her aunt's room. As she entered that, she paused just long enough to snatch a counterpane from the bed. With this in her hands she ran into the entry back of the room. Manfully she tugged at the ring in the trapdoor. What was the matter with it? Would it never yield? At last it was turning! She tugged again and again ere the opening was disclosed. Down the narrow flight of steps she threw herself, almost pitching headlong

in her haste. The kegs of powder were there, ranged along the center of the floor, and protected from dampness. She selected one of the largest, and spreading out the counterpane, quickly poured the contents thereon. Then as quickly she divested herself of her outer skirt, standing in the shorter one beneath.

“I must have naught to impede my progress,” she thought. “I may have to run for my life for all that I know.”

She little realized with what prophecy she spoke. Even then a band of Indians was almost within sight of the house. Fortunately she did not know of this. Had she known, it might have unnerved her.

She tied the powder up carefully despite her haste. Then she slipped her head through the noose she had made after knotting the ends of the counterpane, thus placing the weight upon her back as she had seen the Indians do.

Looking neither to the right nor the left, she made haste through the hall and down the steps, turning once more in the direction of the fort. It was not much speed she could make encumbered as she now was, but she made all the haste possible. The path was deserted as she pushed on toward the blockhouse, but coming nearer, ever nearer, she could hear those horrible sounds. What if she were over-

taken by the Indians ere she reached safely the fort with her precious burden? Suppose that the red fiends had overpowered those who strove to hold them at bay, and were even then rushing down upon the helpless ones at the fort? Yes, those fearful cries sounded mightily like yells of triumph.

On sped Caroline as rapidly as the weight of the powder would allow. Her strength was beginning to ebb, her breath came in gasps, but still the brave girl put forth every energy. A selfish heart would have whispered, "Throw away the burden, and think only of yourself!" But not so Caroline's. She held at that moment no thought of the sacrifice she might be called on to pay because of her courageous deed. If she had thought of it, it would have been but to feel that her life was as naught compared to the great need of those at the blockhouse. If the powder was lost to them, then not only one but many lives would be the forfeit. This thought gave additional wings to her feet; it was wonderful how she sped over the ground.

She was now almost within sight of the blockhouse. Another turning in the path and those watching from the sentry boxes must see her. How she hoped and prayed that there were men at the fort, men who would have their guns in readiness! For close upon her now rang out those horrible

cries, and added to them were sounds that almost caused her heart to cease its beatings. The Indians had no doubt seen her. Perhaps they guessed her purpose, had knowledge as to the nature of her burden. She wondered again what had become of the brave men who so recently had striven to hold them back. She learned later that, seeing the hopelessness of the endeavor, they had scattered to the swamps, trusting they could gain the fort from that direction. A shudder passed through Caroline as she thought of their probable fate.

A sudden shrill cry like that of some wild beast about to hurl itself upon its victim smote her ear. She dared not look around. Every moment she expected to feel a hand clutch and hold her. An arrow sped past her, then another. More terrible still, a musket spoke, and she could hear the bullet as it whistled by. The Indians were using the arms given them by the Spaniards. Even more deadly now was the peril, for the tiniest spark flashing from the pan of one of the muskets might ignite the powder in the counterpane. How terrible the consequences then! Still the brave girl gave no heed to herself. All thought was of the powder, how to prevent its loss.

But now the guns from the fort rang out. Brave men were there, and they were in readiness. They

had heard the yelling of the Indians, and suspected they were in pursuit of some victim or victims. Just as the hand of a savage was outstretched to grasp Caroline, a well-aimed bullet sent him low. So, too, fared the next and still the next one rushing on behind their leader. Then one of the gates swung suddenly open, forms sped toward her, and, more dead than alive, Caroline was dragged within the harbor of the fort. The heavy gate swung to again, and not a moment too soon! For the great bar had barely caught within its staples when the savages threw themselves upon the gates. But a deadly fire now poured down upon them from the sentry boxes. They stood it for a few moments, returning it as best they could, then began suddenly to retreat, leaving many dead at the gates.

“I have brought the powder!” Caroline gasped as they pulled her within the opening.

She saw the face of her aunt, white and questioning; then Philip's, the eyes wide with wonder. Other familiar forms, too, began to crowd about her. Then for a few moments she lost consciousness. When she came to herself again she was in her aunt's arms, while many voices were speaking her name, and all lips were praising the brave deed that had just been accomplished.

“But for your thought and courage, lass,” Mr.



As the hand of a savage was outstretched to grasp Caroline, a well-aimed bullet sent him low. — Page 306.

Gibbes was saying, “the blockhouse would have been almost entirely without powder. Truly were we all in panic to have come away without once thinking of this most important article.”

The dusk was now gathering about them. The Indians had withdrawn to the forest and did not seem of the mind to renew the attack speedily. They were no doubt waiting for re-enforcements. Despite this cessation and the little damage the Indians had accomplished in their attack upon the fort, voices of mourning filled the blockhouse. This grief was for the absent husbands and sons, fathers and brothers whose fate was as yet unknown. But soon, under cover of the night, many of these began coming into the stockade. Soon Mr. Hastings, Mr. Ludwell, Anthony, Charles, and others of their neighbors were safe within shelter. But some had fallen never to greet their loved ones again.

Captain Chiquan had withdrawn his men to a rendezvous, there to await re-enforcements. It was said that a body of the Governor's own troops was on the march from Charles Town. Another detachment had gone in the direction of Po-ca-tal-i-go. The gravest fears were now entertained as to the safety of the commission sent to the Yamassee capital.

O-co-nos-tee had again proven himself a hero. It

was largely due to his efforts and to those of the young men attached to him that so many of the women and children had been brought within the fort. Again and again he had exposed his life for their sakes.

As the night settled down the red glow against the sky in many directions told the story of rifled and burning homes. The Indians had for the time being abandoned the attack upon the fort to engage in the wild revel of applying the torch.

CHAPTER XXII

“AT-TA-HAL-LA, PRINCE OF THE SUN”

THE night wore on. Few thought of sleeping. Runners, slipping through the Indian ranks from time to time, brought news of a startling nature. The Indians had attacked the settlements at Port Royal and those in St. Bartholomew's Parish. Ninety of the whites had been slain at Port Royal and more than a hundred in St. Bartholomew's. Three hundred of the people of St. Helena, with their minister, Rev. Mr. Guy, had barely escaped with their lives by means of a merchant ship that chanced to be in the harbor.

While these awful scenes had been taking place to the southward, the Indians had also marched down upon the inhabitants from the north and west. A band of them, acting in concert with those who had attacked the settlers of Goose Creek, had fallen upon a settlement on the Santee, murdering a full score of the whites and twice as many of the blacks. The rest they had carried into captivity.

As the night advanced the reports grew of a more

harrowing nature. From the River May to the Cape Fear the Indians were banded together for the destruction of the whites. Full six thousand strong they were closing in from every direction. And in all that territory there were scarce eleven hundred men, counting even the boys of sixteen, to oppose them. Truly, it seemed that death was hanging over the Carolinas, and that all within the Province were doomed.

From information that was brought it was learned that the Governor, at the head of about three hundred men, had gone out to meet the Indians advancing from the south in the hope of driving them back ere turning his attention to those from the northward.

During the night they heard sounds of heavy firing, and learned later that Captain Chiquan, having secured re-enforcements, had returned to renew the attack upon the Indians now holding such wild revels throughout the Goose Creek settlement. After heroic work he succeeded in routing them. About daybreak he and his men, their ammunition thoroughly exhausted, reached the blockhouse, bringing several prisoners with them.

The morning broke clear and beautiful. It was Easter Sunday. How differently they had expected to spend it! What joyous plans they had formed

for its celebration within the sacred walls of the church.

The golden sunlight streaming down upon the haggard faces of those within the inclosure seemed a mockery. The birds sang as if they would burst their throats with melody; the scent of the honeysuckles, of the wild rose and of the jessamines was wafted upon the morning breeze. The skies shone with a royal blue, and the tall pines murmured as their branches swayed to and fro. All was life, joyous life without, yet, coming nearer, ever nearer, was that carnival of death.

Very early Dr. LeJau summoned the people for prayer. Scarcely audible was the minister's voice as he began, but as the supplication proceeded, faith in that Almighty One to whom his petition was addressed gave him strength of voice as well as strength of soul.

“Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

Life! that was the boon they craved, the sweetest this world had to give, the most precious in the one to come.

The prayers concluded, the people separated, those having no military duty to perform gathering

in little groups here and there. Caroline still held her Prayer Book. All through the trying experiences through which she had passed the little volume had lain safely stowed away in the bosom of her dress. As she had opened it to follow the minister in the services something had fluttered from between the leaves to the ground. Stooping to recover it she saw that it was the sprig of laurel given her by Captain Harrison. It had become well pressed from lying between the pages of the book. But it still retained its greenness. She was looking at the laurel token again as she walked away, regarding it intently, and she was thinking earnestly of Captain Harrison. She wondered where he was now and what he was doing. No doubt he was with the Governor to the southward, doing brave battle against their foes. How she wished he might be here to help them in their dire straits! He seemed so alert, so resourceful, so imbued with a spirit of mastery that all acknowledged.

“At what are you looking so intently, Mistress Caroline?”

It was Anthony Hastings who spoke as he paused beside her.

“At a sprig of laurel,” was the reply.

“A sprig of laurel?” he repeated, gazing at her inquiringly.

“Yes, at a sprig of laurel, and there is a story connected with it. Come where we can sit down and I will tell it you.”

By this time Charles, Philip, Elizabeth, and Sarah had also joined them.

They drew apart, seating themselves upon the sprawled trunk of a palmetto, which had been allowed to remain within the inclosure.

Caroline began at once the story of all the experiences that had befallen her on that eventful day when they had captured the sloop. All had heard the latter part of the story, but even to Charles and Philip that relating to the sprig of laurel was new.

She had told her uncle and aunt, but somehow she had hesitated to confide the matter to Charles and Philip, fearing they would greet it with only amusement.

“Well, Caroline,” exclaimed Charles as she concluded, “this is indeed strange! If I did not know Captain Harrison so well, I should say he was real silly.”

“What could have been his reason, I wonder,” speculated Anthony. “We have always believed that Captain Harrison is somebody with authority. ’Tis well known he is an agent of the Council. I have heard my father say several times that he has

displayed papers signed by the Governor, giving him full power to proceed in weighty matters."

"Then you may rest assured he is a man of some consequence," declared Elizabeth, "or Governor Craven would never have bestowed such authority."

"And to think our Caroline has been of service to such a personage!" exclaimed Philip. "My dear, there is no telling what he may do for you if you care to bring the claim to his attention."

He spoke playfully, for the moment forgetting the terrors by which they were surrounded.

"I think I'll not care to do that, Philip," she replied, returning the smile. "If only I can have his friendship I shall be satisfied, for he is really one of the most courtly gentlemen I have ever met."

"A courtly gentleman roving around the woods in this way," spoke Sarah Blake, "mingling with rough backwoods men and with Indians? Well, that is strange! I, for one, don't believe he is a person of consequence. He is just assuming, so as to gain his ends in some way."

"Have you ever seen him?" asked Elizabeth, turning to look at her squarely.

"Nay," she was forced to confess.

"Then reserve your judgment until you do. He has been at Crow's Nest. You, Caroline, remember

the day well, I know. I can say with you, and heartily, that he is a gentleman with the most perfect grace of manner I have ever seen. The Landgrave himself can't equal him."

"Well, if that really be true," chimed in Sarah again, "and he is the personage you think, I wouldn't be long, Caroline, if I were you, sending him, when the war is over, the laurel token, and I would ask him for something magnificent."

"But he has already given her the sloop," interposed Charles. "That was indeed a handsome return; though our Caroline would never look at it in the light of having done anything to deserve a reward."

"That is like her," commented Anthony.

The mention of the sloop caused many exclamations of dismay and regret.

"How many fine trips we had planned to have by means of it!" exclaimed Sarah. "Now these terrible Indians have no doubt seized and carried it away."

"If they have not already put the torch to it," said Anthony sadly.

"Maybe not," spoke Caroline cheerfully. "'Twas only yesterday uncle had it carried up one of the arms of the creek. Perhaps they will not find it."

"I fervently hope they won't," added Charles. "We may need it yet."

Among the prisoners brought in by Captain Chiquan and his men was a small band of Creeks and with them their wounded chief, U-ga-chee.

At the conclusion of Caroline's story, as the young people walked toward the gates of the stockade, they saw the young chief lying near, attended by three of his warriors. These Captain Chiquan had permitted to go unbound so that they might minister to U-ga-chee. However, as the white people could afford to run no risks, guards watched these Indians very closely.

The young chief had been brought from his close quarters so that he might breathe the fresh air and get the warmth of the sunlight. For, though he was an enemy the hearts of his captors had melted toward him. Apart from the fact that he was very young and had an engaging countenance altogether out of keeping with his savage surroundings, he was very badly wounded—how badly they did not realize until afterwards.

The chief seemed not more than twenty years of age. Despite the paint upon his face it could be seen that his features were regular, even handsome, his eyes large and expressive, and even in his pain they were flashing with spirit.

Urged by an incontrollable impulse Caroline paused to address him. No doubt he would not be able to understand her words, yet she could show him her pity. At first he repulsed her, but, seeing her sympathy, took the water which she had asked Charles to bring for her. To her surprise she found that he could speak English. Afterwards she learned that he had been many times in Charles Town.

As they stood in a little group about him the gate suddenly opened and O-co-nos-tee and two of his men came in. Charles and Philip sprang forward to greet their favorite. He had been absent on a long scouting expedition, and they were growing uneasy about him.

From the moment that O-co-nos-tee appeared, a great change had come over the face of the young chief. He tried to raise himself so that he might the more clearly see O-co-nos-tee. His lips were moving, his fingers working nervously.

Elizabeth touched Caroline.

“He is greatly overcome,” she said. “What can be the matter?”

“I think his emotion is caused by the sight of O-co-nos-tee,” replied Caroline. “He seems to know him well.”

O-co-nos-tee was now very close to the litter on

which the young chief lay. He was advancing to speak to Caroline. He was still within a few paces of her when the attendants of U-ga-chee threw their hands upward, and, with sudden, shrill cry, sprang toward O-co-nos-tee, prostrating themselves before him. As they fell upon their knees, they cried again and again:

“At-ta-hal-la! At-ta-hal-la!”

The voice of the young chief joined in the cry. He, too, endeavored to throw his arms upward in gesture of reverence, but desisted quickly, moaning with pain. Yet he still kept his eyes upon O-co-nos-tee. They were glowing like globes of fire.

Over O-co-nos-tee's face there had come, too, a swift, a wondrous change. He stooped, seeking to lift the men at his feet, speaking to them as he did so; but in the next moment all his thoughts, his looks, were centered upon the form of the young chief lying stricken before him. He advanced to the litter and knelt beside it, his hands outstretched, his face convulsed with emotion, his lips murmuring as a mother murmurs to her child.

“What is the meaning of this?” asked Captain Chiquan as he appeared in their midst.

“From all I can gather, captain,” replied an old Indian trader, “these two men are brothers; they have not seen each other in quite a while, and the

one we know as O-co-nos-tee is the elder, and therefore rightly the chief.”

So it proved. Their Indian friend was no longer O-co-nos-tee. He was At-ta-hal-la of the At-tal-bane Creeks. Being the eldest son, and the old chief having recently died, he was now head of the tribe.

There had been a bitter quarrel between the old chief and this elder son. Wounded to his heart's core, At-ta-hal-la, or O-co-nos-tee, as we know him, had left home never to return. Soon his people believed him dead.

News having spread among the Indians, they flocked about him, uttering peculiar cries and prostrating themselves before him, and making such gestures as they could with their manacled hands.

They called him At-ta-hal-la over and over again, designating him as “ Prince of the Light, Son of him who had been King of the Morning Sun.”

In vain O-co-nos-tee sought to stay them. It was indeed painful to him there under the eyes of his young brother, of him who had believed himself the chief. No doubt the heart of the elder brother ached with the wish that he might have died so believing. He spoke to his people sternly now, seeing that he could in no other way control them. Then he knelt again beside his stricken brother,

pouring out his love and grief for him in pathetic accents.

Suddenly a shrill and piercing cry rent the air. Then another added itself to this one, and another, till soon a chorus of wild, wolfish cries filled with an awful din all the space about those who listened. Anon the voices rose and swelled into a mad chaos of sound, then suddenly died away again into a low and sobbing chant. It was the death song of the Creeks. For the keen eyes of the attendants had discovered that in the face of U-ga-chee which told them that the end was near. He was indeed dying, and soon all was over.

U-ga-chee was gone, and if O-co-nos-tee had had the intention to resign all in his favor, that sacrifice of love was now denied him. He was head of his tribe. His people would look to him to assume his rights. Considering their piteous condition, could he deny them the help his leadership would bring? But could he influence them as he desired? For never more should the hand of an At-tal-bane Creek be raised against the white settlers of Carolina while he was chief. If they followed him, it must be under the banner of peace and friendship for their white brother.

While he thus mused, O-co-nos-tee's heart was filled with other sadness save that brought through

the death of his brother. His people had raised their hands in war against the whites. Death had ruthlessly been dealt by them. Through their savage attack upon the settlers already a score or more of the whites lay dead. Would not the vengeance of the settlers fall quickly? Could even his friendship, the remembrance of his many deeds of service in behalf of the whites stay the hand of the avengers? He covered his head, moaning in anguish as he thought of what must come. The only beam of hope in this dark sky was the knowledge that had been given him that fully one-half of his tribe had remained at home, not caring to mix in the trouble. They, at least, would be left him.

O-co-nos-tee was quickly drawn from his sad thoughts by our young people from Laurel Hill and Crow's Nest, who crowded about him, offering their congratulations. They did not forget either to speak tenderly of the dead brother. Their words touched the heart of the grateful Indian. He had felt attached to them before. He was doubly so now. For had they not proven their friendship by sorrowing with him when he sorrowed, and by expressing their interest now that he had been restored to his tribe.

Soon O-co-nos-tee knew, through Captain Chi-

quan, the verdict. Some of his people, for his sake, would be spared; but others, the more vengeful ones, must die. Considering all the settlers had suffered through these Indians, this penalty was lighter than even O-co-nos-tee had dared to hope.

CHAPTER XXIII

A REVELATION

ERE that bright Easter day came to a close more news of a terrible nature was brought to them. First they learned that the commission sent by the Governor to Po-ca-tal-i-go had been massacred, every man save one. He had escaped only after being wounded. Horrible indeed was his recital of the scenes through which he had passed.

The runner by whom these terrible tidings were brought to the fort had no more than delivered himself of them when a second one appeared with the intelligence that, in an encounter with the savages, gallant Captain Barker of the Governor's troops, dispatched to the aid of the besieged Goose Creek settlers, had fallen, together with full two score of his men. The remainder had either been captured or cut off from reaching the fort. This messenger also brought the information that the Indians were closing in upon the Carolina settlers from every direction. The Creeks west of the Cherokee River (now called Broad River), had already crossed that

stream and joined themselves to the Cherokees for the extermination of the whites. Dark indeed was the outlook for the Carolinians.

“The only place where safety may really be counted on now is within the fortifications at Charles Town!” declared Captain Chiquan.

In this opinion all concurred, and, acting upon the feeling, messengers were at once dispatched to the city with urgent request for such craft as could be sent to carry away the people. Great skill as well as caution had to be observed in getting through the Indian lines to Charles Town. The first to volunteer for this perilous service was O-co-nos-tee and his band of trusty young Indians.

“If men can accomplish it, these will!” more than one voice asserted. The question that troubled them now more than any other was:

“Can the craft be dispatched in time?”

O-co-nos-tee and his young braves slipped away through a small wicket that was used by the men when they departed or came singly or in small groups. The opening of the great gates was something of a cumbersome task. However, O-co-nos-tee and his little band had been gone barely a half-hour when a commotion occurred on the outside of the main entrance. In a few moments Captain Chiquan’s orders rang out to open the gates.

Caroline, who was standing not far away, heard one of the soldiers say :

“ ’Tis some Spanish prisoners. They have been captured in the swamp by Lieutenant Parker and a detachment of men who were sent out as scouts. Now, indeed, will they get what they deserve.”

At that moment the heavy gates swung apart and the Lieutenant and his men appeared at the opening.

In their midst, securely bound, they had five prisoners. The men seemed to be giving a great deal of trouble, especially two of them. They would not move of themselves, and so had to be pushed along.

Suddenly one of these men raised his head. A soldier had prodded him to make him step within the gate, and imprecations were on the prisoner’s lips.

As he came fully into view, Caroline felt her heart leap. For he whose face was now turned toward her was the Spanish spy known as Captain Dalton!

Almost at the same time that Caroline recognized him he saw Caroline. A deep flush overspread his face, and immediately he became quiet. But only for a few moments. In the next space he wrenched himself away from the soldier who grasped him,

and, springing toward Caroline, threw himself at her feet.

"I will tell you all now!" he cried, "for 'tis *you* who must save me!"

White as a lily Caroline stood looking down at him. What did he mean?

Ere he could utter further speech the soldiers dragged him away.

"Pardon, young mistress," one of them said to her, "for his having annoyed you. He broke away from us ere we realized what he intended to do."

An hour later a strange request came to Caroline; one, too, that caused indignation when it was known. Captain Dalton, the Spanish spy, wished to speak with her.

"What can the wretch want?" exclaimed Charles. "Don't go, Caroline. He may do you some harm even here."

Her uncle, too, was against her going. It was not that he apprehended any harm for her, but the request struck him as bold and impudent now that the man was revealed in his true character. But there was that which urged Caroline to plead that she might go. Strange stirrings were in her heart, and in her ears echoes of those unaccountable words he had spoken in the myrtle copse.

At last Mr. Ludwell gave his consent, but he insisted on accompanying her.

Permission had been given Dalton to speak privately with Caroline. On her entrance with her uncle the guard withdrew.

The prisoner was in an underground apartment, and, as the sun was now near to its going down, but a dim ray of light stole through the small opening. However, candles had been given Mr. Ludwell to be used through the interview.

With trembling step and a heart that beat rapidly, Caroline followed her uncle into the apartment.

“Caroline,” cried a voice from out the semi-darkness, and to her it was freighted with a newness, a strangeness that set her all a-tremble. “Caroline, does no childish memory stir within your heart? Has all that which impressed itself upon your young mind entirely departed? Is there not a look, a word, a sound, a cadence of the voice that you can recall? Listen! Didst ever hear aught like this?”

Without further word he began to whistle, soft and low and musical as a bird's first awakening pipe, then steadily gaining force and melody till a perfect shower of the notes of feathered songsters filled all the space about them. Jays were there and bluebirds, orioles, thrushes, and the king of the

Southern forests, the mocking bird. It ended with a roundelay, a perfect storm of notes, a burst of melody such as well might have called forth a child's noisy demonstrations of delight.

"Uncle! Uncle!" cried Caroline.

She swayed toward Mr. Ludwell. But for the arm he so quickly extended she would have fallen.

"Oh, what does it mean? 'Tis not the first time I have heard such as that! Where was it? When was it? There is a mist before me! I cannot see clearly! But the sounds! They echo in my heart, and—and they have been there before!"

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Mr. Ludwell sternly.

Up to this time he had been so astonished at what had taken place as to be incapable of speech. But now that he had found his tongue his wrath was warm. He had, too, a score to settle with this man, a score in words, if no more.

"Why do you so excite her?" he continued. "Wretch, have you not already made us endure enough by the indignity put upon us, without seeking now to torture this child? What you have to say to her say quickly. 'Twas against my wish she came, and I will permit her to stay but a brief space. 'Tis like your boldness to want to speak to her at all."

“Have done, James Ludwell. . Methinks you will hang your head in very shame because of those words when you learn that I have to tell. I——”

He broke off suddenly, turning again to Caroline, and again his manner, voice, his face all changed as by some swift transformation.

“Caroline, does not your heart tell you the truth?” he asked gently.

He drew nearer, his hands extended. There was a look in his face that almost transfigured it. Tenderness, pity, yearning, were all pictured there, but she saw naught of them because now she stood with downcast eyes and drooping head.

“Child, come to me,” he commanded. “I have the right to ask, for I am your father!”

“*My father!*” she cried with a little choking sound, and tried to look at him, but could not.

Truly it was an astonishing revelation. Yet she was not wholly surprised.

“Her father!” exclaimed Mr. Ludwell, and now he was almost beside himself with wrath. “Villain! this is another of your bold moves! If ’tis to hear but this you have had my niece summoned, then quickly shall she depart.”

He raised his voice to call to the guard, but Dalton, divining his intention, quickly stayed it.

"Wait!" he commanded. "Hear me to the end, James Ludwell, before you act."

"My father!" repeated Caroline piteously. "Nay, nay, it cannot be. My father is dead."

"Thus it was told you."

"But there were those who brought the news to my mother who saw my father drown."

"They were sent that they might so tell her."

"Then——"

She could scarce begin what she essayed to speak. But the expression of her face was such there was no misunderstanding her meaning.

"Let me tell you as much as I can now," he said. "The rest may wait."

"You were but four years old when I sailed away from home that last time. I had my own vessel, and it was loaded with tanned leather and many bales of costly furs. We were run down by a rover of the seas. That one time he reckoned without his host. We were far better armed than he knew, and, instead of being the captor, he was the captured. Vessel and crew in my possession, I yielded in an evil moment to a temptation that mightily beset me."

She drew back from him a pace or so, horror plainly written upon her face. A similar expression

was on that of Mr. Ludwell. Truly this man deserved naught of consideration.

"I see," she said with tremulous voice; "you, too, took to pirating."

A glow for a moment overspread his face, and his eyes shifted away from her; then he said boldly:

"'Tis true. I make no shift to deny it." He paused, then went on as boldly as before: "If that had been all, then might I not, with coolness and proper care, have become the outlaw I did. For many fine gentlemen in those days, yea, as in these, did even more than I and were winked at by King and Council. But in a moment of recklessness, of a daring unaccountable, I did that which has set a price upon my head. Child, I could not then return to her I loved, your mother, to you—nor——"

"Say not that you loved her!" she cried in fierce protest.

She faced him now, her lips tremulous, her eyes flashing.

"But I did," he protested. "Yea, I do now, with all the fervor of my heart, though she is in heaven, with a remembrance that can never put another in her place."

"Yet you left her to mourn for you as dead; to

die at last through sad grieving, as many believe. You left, too, your child——”

“But not without careful provision for her future,” he interrupted. “Caroline, Juan Silvo knew, for I took care that he should. Think you the little left in Barbados could have turned out so well had not addition been made thereto?”

“And I have been supported by that—by that which you——”

The pain in the voice, the acute suffering so plainly depicted in her face moved him greatly.

“Made only through honest trading. Believe this, I entreat you, for however falsely I may have dealt with others, I will tell only the truth to you.”

He was her father. He had said it. Further, he had indisputable proof of it. Even Mr. Ludwell was forced at length to believe. There were letters, trinkets, and other evidences, which he had managed to keep by him through all his trying experiences. That he was indeed Edward Percival, the father of Caroline, there could no longer be a doubt.

CHAPTER XXIV

“ ’TIS THE TOKEN YOU GAVE ME ”

“ HE is my father ! ”

Over and over again Caroline said this sentence to herself. Edward Percival, alias Dalton, the noted Spanish spy, he on whose head a price had been set, who was even then in prison awaiting trial for heinous offenses—he was her father! Further than this, and even more trying in its nature, was the fact that he had besought her to plead with her uncle to use all his influence to save him. For Caroline had had a second interview with him at which her uncle had not been present.

When the subject had been broached to him, James Ludwell was obdurate.

“ My dear,” he said, “ I cannot do this. Even for your sake I cannot. Let him suffer the penalty. He deserves it. Remember you not how ruthlessly he placed even your own life in peril? Had he a care for us or for you when he brought muskets and ammunition into the neighborhood with which our In-

dian foes were to be armed—nay, were armed to a certain extent?”

“But, uncle, he has told me that he had a plan for our rescue. Oh, I cannot believe he would have placed our lives in peril!”

“All the same, my child, the record stands against him that he did; and not only were our own lives ruthlessly exposed, but the lives of scores of men, women, and children throughout the neighborhood. Say no more, Caroline. When I think of all this man has done; how that he used tongue and purse to incite the Indians against us; thought no more of the lives of innocent people than if they had been those of so many ants; even though he is your father, I cannot bring myself to interfere. I could not even if such interference would do aught of good, which it would not, believe me.”

“Oh, uncle, ’tis so dreadful to think that he must die!”

Her voice broke here, and, sobbing, she leaned against him.

“Uncle, uncle,” moaned Caroline, “I cannot endure it. I do not love him, it is true, for he has never been as a father to me. Still, he is my parent, and this I can never forget!”

“Caroline,” said her aunt as she drew the sobbing girl to her side, “be governed by us, my darling.

There is no need that you should disclose what this man is to you. Surely he has manliness enough left to spare you this. You owe him naught of that which you propose. Think how he deserted you when you were scarcely more than a baby. He deliberately separated himself from you and your mother, leaving her to die of a broken heart, as I have heard, because that she believed him dead. If he had had the right feeling toward you and her, think you he could have acted as he did? ”

“ But, aunt, he told me that he was driven by the force of circumstances to take such a step as made it impossible to return to us without giving his life as the forfeit.”

“ I do not believe it! ” exclaimed Mr. Ludwell. “ I am satisfied that Edward Percival deliberately planned the career on which he entered. My child, I do not wish to be brutal. Forgive me if I thus seem. ’Tis true he provided for your temporal wants, and with no niggardly hand. But think you he could really care for you? That there dwells in his heart in any degree a father’s tender love for his child? Has not his conduct shown plainly that no such feeling exists? ”

“ Uncle, remember you not that he told me he had safely planned to have no harm befall us? ”

“ But, Caroline, think of the other lives he would have sacrificed—yea, has sacrificed! ”

“ Uncle, I know it. He has done wrong. Oh, truly fearful are the deeds for which he has to account! but—but, oh, uncle, despite this I cannot bear to see him die! ”

She paused; then from her tortured heart one cry rang out, weighted with her pain.

“ Oh, Uncle James, is there *no one* who can save him? ”

“ No one, my child, save the Governor. Only he could interfere now, but he will not do it, I am certain.”

“ Uncle, I feel that I *must* speak out! I must beg for his life! It seems to me that I could never be happy again if I kept silent, for I remember through everything that he is my father! ”

“ Caroline, darling, listen to your uncle! ” It was her aunt’s voice pleading with her again. “ Believe me he has spoken that which is best. We know how your tender heart has been torn by this terrible happening. We can see how it struggles to assert itself, how all that is noblest in your nature springs to the surface. Your impulse is to speak out, to declare the relation that exists. It seems cowardly to you to keep silent. But, my dear, what good could it do? There is naught that will save him now. Even

your piteous appeals would not move these determined men a hair's breadth. They would be touched by them, but that is all."

"Aunt! aunt! say not so. They surely would spare him if I told them *all!*"

"My child, they would not. Nay, they cannot if they would. The laws of the land say that he must die. That which you desire to confess would bring only pain and shame to you, my dear one. Spare yourself, I beseech you."

She paused a moment as though to gain her consent to that which she was about to speak.

"Yea, spare us, too, my child; for the pain that came to you would come also to us; your suffering would be ours."

"Oh, aunt, I could not bear for *that* to be!"

Had they silenced her? It seemed so then. But on the morrow, when she learned that the tribunal before which the spies had been tried had made quick work of them, that they were to be hanged in two hours' time, her heart cried out again to make effort to save the one who was her father.

Again and again Caroline felt herself moved by the impulse to seek Captain Chiquan and tell him all, to implore him to wait until they could get a message to the Governor. Oh, where was Captain Harrison? Surely he would help her now. Once

more she thought of the Laurel Token. Was he not in a position to give her aid? Had it not been said again and again that he was a close friend to the Governor? But how could the Governor be reached? He was hotly engaged with the Indians to the southward. The last runners into the fort had declared that he and his men were closely pressed and that all they could do was to hold their ground against the Indians.

A gloomy feeling pervaded the fort. Even Captain Chiquan was beginning to lose heart. No sign had yet come from the messengers sent to the city. Had they failed in their efforts to get through the lines and been captured?

Philip and Charles knew Caroline's sad story, now. Their father had thought it best to tell them. She could never doubt their hearts again after all the love and sympathy they poured out upon her. Sweet, indeed, to her was the tenderness they displayed.

The gallows on which the spies were to be hanged had been completed. It consisted of two upright logs with a third securely fastened across them at the top.

"There is the drum beat!" exclaimed a woman within the fort. "I suppose the spies are being led out now. Well, I must say 'tis no more than they

deserve, yet,” her face softening somewhat, “I can’t help feeling sorry for the poor wretches!” and she shuddered.

Caroline had caught the muffled tones of the drum. She heard, too, the words of the woman. Her heart almost ceased to beat. A trembling seized her from head to foot. At that moment none of her loved ones were near. Without further thought, obeying an impulse she found it impossible to resist, she sprang up and sped without.

As she came into the space outside a squad of men were just passing. They were marching with slow, steady step, their muskets reversed, and in their midst the prisoners who were to be executed.

Caroline gazed at them a moment, her face white, every muscle rigid save the quivering ones of the lips.

“Caroline!” It was her uncle who spoke. He had seen her as she appeared at the entrance to the blockhouse, and had hastened to her. “Caroline, dear child, this is no place for you. Let us again within.” He took her gently but firmly by the arm.

Caroline resisted him.

“My dear,” he pleaded, “do not look upon this dreadful thing! Try to be reconciled to it. Believe me, naught that you can do or say now will

help matters for him, whereas disclosures will be terrible for you, for us all."

But the words fell upon unheeding ears. Caroline was as one distraught. With a desperation born of her anguish, she wrenched herself from him, and, speeding as some maddened animal might have sped, she threw herself directly in the path of the advancing squad and almost at the feet of the young Huguenot commander.

"Spare him!" she cried, her eyes raised imploringly to the face of Captain Chiquan, "spare him who is called Captain Dalton! Oh, he *must not die!*"

For an instant the young captain looked at her in a bewildered way. He thought her head turned by the awful tragedy about to take place. It really was a terrible ordeal for the women and children, and he had not been in favor of having the execution take place within the inclosure. But the peril by which they were surrounded forbade its being conducted without.

He gave a swift word of command and the squad halted on the instant. Then he stooped and raised Caroline, and, while he steadied her on her feet, said:

"This is no sight for your eyes, young mistress. Let me entreat that you return within. And plead

not for the life of this man,” he added earnestly. “ ’Tis not worth one tear from you. He has wrought great mischief and must die! ”

To naught that he said did Caroline pay heed. Sight, hearing, thought were all engrossed with the haggard, unkempt figure in the midst of the squad of soldiers. He presented a piteous sight, crushed, dejected, conquered at last by the nearness of the awful fate that awaited him. But as her voice fell upon his ear, he raised his eyes to her. As he caught the significance of the words she uttered, the light of hope dawned suddenly, and he threw his head upward with the look, the gesture of one confidently expecting reprieve.

“ Spare him! ” pleaded Caroline again. “ Oh, Captain Chiquan, he must not die! Hear me, sir, I entreat. Lieutenant Parker, Master Hastings, Dr. LeJau—oh, sirs, I beg you one and all to aid me in making request for his life. At least help me to get the staying of the sentence until the Governor can be reached. For, sirs—for, sirs——”

The disclosure was trembling upon her lips. To the sensitive ears of those listening for it, expecting it, yet dreading to hear it, it came all too soon.

“ Caroline! Caroline! ”

With a repetition of her name, with an agony of

entreaty in every syllable, they were crowding about her, those loved ones, who sought for her sake to stay the revelation that could only overwhelm her with misery.

“Caroline! Caroline!”

In vain. No earthly power could stay her now. She heard not the voices. She paid no heed to the loving arms of her aunt clasped about her. She saw only those burning eyes fastened upon her. They plainly bade her speak.

“Sirs, I beg you to spare his life, because—because *he is my father!*”

She said the words bravely, her eyes unflinchingly regarding the surprised faces about her. Though she saw them clearly, she was conscious only in a dazed way of what was transpiring. She knew that her aunt, her uncle, Charles, Philip, were all there; that each was murmuring words to her; that Elizabeth had grasped her hand and that Anthony was standing near, his face quivering with some deep emotion. She was conscious, too, that the gate had suddenly opened to admit a squad of men and that there were quick exclamations greeting the newcomers. Yet all these things were to her as that which pass in a dream.

“What is it?” asked a voice suddenly. “What means the commotion?”

The tones acted as an electric shock upon Caroline. She started, quivering in every limb. Then, as she raised her eyes, beholding the face of the newcomer, her own radiated with joy. It was as the bursting of the sun's rays from out the pall-like cloud.

“ Captain Harrison! Captain Harrison!” she cried exultingly.

Then, as she threw herself at his feet, she told him all in quick, passionate sentences, fraught, too, with a pleading it seemed no heart could resist.

“ Oh, sir, I beg you to use your influence—I know that it is great—to stay this execution until the Governor can be reached.”

She rose suddenly. Her hands sought the folds of her dress. Quickly she took therefrom her Prayer Book and began to turn the leaves. Soon between her fingers lay a dark green sprig, shining, smooth-pressed leaves of laurel.

“ See!” she cried; “ ’tis the token you gave me! Remember you not, sir? the time? the place? the promise? If ever I needed a friend who had it in his power to do much for me, you would be that friend. I was but to send the sprig of laurel. Oh, surely, sir, you remember. ’Twas but a trifling service I rendered, yet you were so good—oh, sir, you promised—will you not see the Governor?”

He looked at her, a strange expression flitting across his face. He moved a little nearer to her, and was about to speak, when a quick exclamation interrupted him. It came from Lieutenant Parker, who now saw plainly the face raised to Caroline's.

"'Tis our commander, men!" he cried. "See you not? though in strange array. 'Tis no less a personage than the Governor himself!"

Then, as a mighty shout rent the air, the words came from a score of throats:

"Hail, Charles Craven, Lord Palatine of Carolina!"

"*The Governor!*" The words came to Caroline with startling force. In no wise was she prepared for them; yet at sound of them a great joy filled her heart. He whom she had known as Captain Harrison was the ruler of the Province. In his hands rested all authority. She had just besought a boon of him; the fulfilling of a promise; intercession of another, the highest in the land, not dreaming that he himself was that one, with all power of life or of death.

He took the sprig of laurel from her hand. His face was very grave, his voice quivering with emotion.

"I remember well, Mistress Caroline, the day I

gave this into your keeping. But speak not lightly of the service you rendered me. ’Twas one of momentous import, not to me alone, but to the entire Province.”

He paused, remembering what this man he had then hunted was to her. A look of compassion overspread his face.

“ Poor child ! poor child ! ” he murmured.

Caroline was now sobbing upon her uncle’s breast. At last she had given way under the terrible strain. But once during all that trying ordeal had she dared to look at him who was her father.

She had sacrificed all for him, disclosed their relationship, not only because she felt that silence would be cowardly, but because she hoped that by declaring all she might save him.

Had she brought reproach, disgrace upon herself by so doing ? Some there might be who thought so, but to a unit those who loved her stood faithfully by her.

“ Brave heart ! ” whispered Elizabeth, “ that was nobly done ! Whether your father is saved or not, all must honor you for it.”

“ You will at least stay his sentence,” the Governor had commanded. “ ’Tis a trying position,” he confessed later to Captain Chiquan. “ The man deserves the penalty. He has forfeited all right to

live; but when I see the face of that young girl and hear her pleading tones, my heart grows weak. Yet I remember that should I give him freedom, I would be amenable to the State. We will at least carry him to Charles Town, and I will lay the matter before the Council."

Thus the Laurel Token stayed for Edward Percival the sentence of death, yet it was as a prisoner he was carried aboard the good craft, *The Skimming Swallow*, which two hours later came bravely up the creek to bear the garrison to the safety of Charles Town. It was a perilous trip, for all along the way Indians lurked, and at any moment they were likely to run into an ambush. But for the darkness which favored escape, the lives of many of those aboard would have been sacrificed.

The Governor was saved the unpleasant ordeal of requesting of the Council the life of Edward Percival, for, having contracted malarial fever through exposure in the swamps, the prisoner died soon after reaching Charles Town. His last words were a prayer for the forgiveness of the child he had so deeply wronged, whose noble sacrifice of self in his behalf had awakened a chord in his heart hitherto untouched.

The Yemassee War lasted ten months, and history records many fearful massacres during its

progress. More than four hundred of the white settlers were slain, and an immense amount of property destroyed. But those within the fortifications at Charles Town escaped, for the city was never taken.

THE END

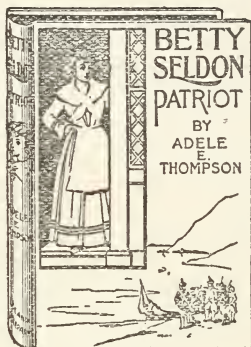
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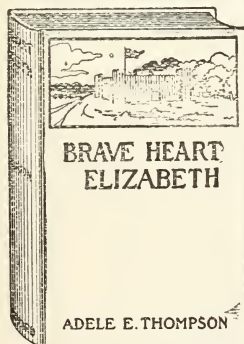
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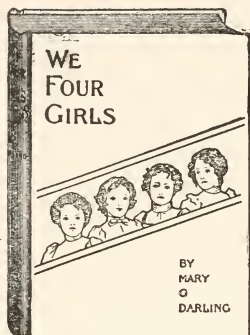
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